





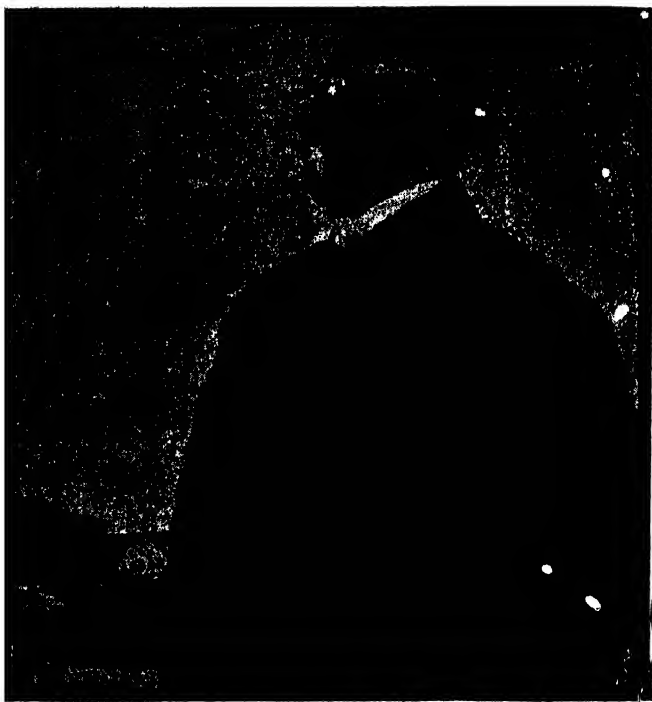








**PRINCE BISMARCK**  
**AN HISTORICAL BIOGRAPHY**



**PRINCE BISMARCK**  
**BY WILLIAM NICHOLSON**

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von Stenard





# PRINCE BISMARCK

## An Historical Biography

BY

CHARLES LOWE, M.A.

LATE BERLIN CORRESPONDENT OF 'THE TIMES'

AUTHOR OF "THE GERMAN EMPEROR, WILLIAM II.," "ALEXANDER III.  
OF RUSSIA," "BISMARCK'S TABLE TALK," "A FALLEN STAR,  
OR THE SCOTS OF FREDERICK," ETC.

WITH TWO PORTRAITS

CHEAP EDITION



LONDON

WILLIAM HEINEMANN

1898

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*"Charles Lowe's is unquestionably the best of all Bismarck biographies which have hitherto appeared, being distinguished from German works of the same kind by greater objectivity, sounder judgment, wider range of view, and a juster conception of the task of an historian."*

Bismarck Jahrbuch.

30893

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

THIS is the first attempt, by an English writer, to place before his countrymen a complete historical sketch of the career of the great German statesman who will occupy such a conspicuous place in the annals of the Nineteenth Century. British and American readers have from time to time been supplied with various translations from the German, dealing with isolated sections and phases of the work and character of Prince Bismarck ; but they have hitherto been without a connected and elaborate account of his whole career from a purely English point of view, and these volumes are intended to supply this much-felt want. Aiming, as they do, at recording in as complete a manner as possible the personal achievements of the greatest man of the age, they at the same time claim to be regarded as a Political History of Modern Germany—in so far as that History can be written without materials which the future alone can disclose.

The portrait of the Chancellor, which forms the frontispiece to this volume, is from a photograph taken on the eve of his seventieth birthday ; and it is generally admitted that no more characteristic likeness of the Prince has ever been produced by a similar process of art.

## PREFACE TO THE PRESENT EDITION

IN preparing this new edition of my historical Biography of Prince Bismarck, which was first published in two-volume form about thirteen years ago, I have reduced and reconstructed it in such a way as to make it at once lighter and more complete.

In particular, I have added two entirely new chapters—one dealing with the stirring and sensational time between the death of the old Emperor and the dismissal of his Chancellor by William II., and the other with the still more sensational period of the Prince's fall from power, ending with his death.

In this completed form I trust that the work will prove more acceptable than ever to English readers, who are now offered a more succinctly comprehensive account of the Iron Chancellor's great career than exists in their own or any other language.

The biography has enjoyed the high honour of being translated into German, and of being pronounced by some critics in the Fatherland to be the best of its kind.

C. L.

CONSTITUTIONAL CLUB,  
LONDON, August 1898.

## *PREFACE*

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The author of this work will feel that his labour has been richly rewarded should it enable his countrymen to acquire a clearer understanding of that great and noble Teutonic nation, whose political unification has stamped the Nineteenth Century with its specific historical character; and whose origin, aspirations, and interests alike fit it to be the friend and ally of the English people as the vanguard in the march of civilisation.

C. L.

BERLIN, 1885

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## ERRATA

*Page 322, line 13—for “1889,” read “1890.”*



*Otto von Bismarck in 1834.*

ÆTAT: 19.

*From a Drawing in possession of the Family.*







## CHAPTER I

### YOUTH

PRINCE OTTO EDWARD LEOPOLD VON BISMARCK, the Unifier of Germany, was born in his father's mansion of Schönhausen, in the Old Mark of Brandenburg, on the 1st April 1815, about two and a half months, that is to say, before the battle of Waterloo. The Schönhausen line of Bismarcks, a very ancient and prolific race, had produced several distinguished soldiers, and not a few diplomatists, some of them, it is true, of the Dugald Dalgetty stamp, though none seem to have been wanting in character and talents. Bismarck himself once boasted that since the Huguenot wars there was not one of his ancestors who had not drawn the sword at some time or other against France, either as mercenaries in the cause of religious liberty, or as patriots in that of political freedom; while several of them had served in the Thirty Years' War, both for and against the Emperor, and also distinguished themselves under Frederick the Great.

Most of the Chancellor's maternal ancestors had belonged to the poor but pedigreed gentry of Brandenburg. His great-great-grandmother, for example, was a near relative of that devoted Lieutenant Katte, who expiated on the scaffold his Jonathan-like attachment to Frederick, Prince of Prussia, afterwards the Great; while, through the female line of his ancestry, he also inherited blood which had run in the veins of the celebrated Fieldmarshal von Derfflinger,

vanquisher of the Swedes. Thus we see that, on the paternal side, Prince Bismarck was descended from a long line of ancestors belonging to the gentry or lesser noblesse of Brandenburg, who passed their lives in hunting, soldiering, and farming; while his mother, Mencken by name, was the daughter of a man who, to the cultured graces of an enlightened mind, added the business merits of a bourgeois bureaucrat; and it will probably appear in the course of this narrative that its subject inherited in a singular degree the opposite qualities thus placed within the reach of both his parents.

After several years' preliminary schooling at one of the *Gymnasias*, or High Schools, in Berlin, young Bismarck passed to the Hanoverian University of Göttingen, where he was less distinguished for study than for revel and duelling, though he was also fond of the society of a quiet and pensive American lad called John Lothrop Motley, one afterwards to become the best history-maker, and the other one of the best history-writers, of the nineteenth century. At Göttingen young Bismarck passed no examinations, but he came off victor in no fewer than twenty-eight duels, and with these honours he returned to Berlin to attend the law-lectures of the celebrated Savigny, though the celebrity of Savigny was powerless to allure the future Chancellor of Germany to his auditorium more than twice. Yet work at the last he must have done, and that, too, with the enormous concentration of his riper powers; for that he passed his first State examination, with credit at least, if not with brilliancy, argued that he must have crammed the labour of six semesters into one. It does not appear that at this time Bismarck had any predilection for the career which he afterwards embraced; but, while indifferent as to gratifying the ambition of his mother, who discovered in her son the making of a great diplomatist, he recognised the prudence of qualifying himself for the discharge of those executive duties which were likely to

devolve upon him in after life as a country gentleman. Accordingly, he got attached as 'Auscultator' to one of the Berlin Courts, but made himself chiefly remarkable, both here and at Aix-la-Chapelle, whither he also went to learn administrative routine, for nonchalance and insubordination to his superiors.

After absolving his military service as a one-year volunteer in the Jäger, or Sharp-Shooters, of the Prussian Guard, he went to Greifswald to attend lectures on agriculture and other practical subjects. For paternal extravagance had sadly encumbered the family estates, and the father offered to retire to Schönhausen in the Mark, intrusting the management of his Pomeranian property to the care of his two sons. Here, then, till events ripened, and a better career offered, was congenial enough employment for him who had now begun to grope about for his true calling like blinded Polyphemus in his cave; and it was a fitting, if an easy, stage in the apprenticeship of the man who was to resuscitate the German Empire, that he should first be called upon to restore the shattered fortunes of his own house.

Here, in Pomerania, Herr von Bismarck threw himself heart and soul into the task that was before him, and he seems to have had as little notion that a country life was not his true vocation, as Oliver Cromwell at one time never doubted that he was born to be a grazier. In fact, not to speak of later resemblances in their career, the early life of the Pomeranian squire had much in common with that of the Huntingdonshire farmer, albeit the passion for prayer-meetings and communion with the Saints might not have been equally strong in both. Bismarck now attended fairs, sold wool, inspected timber, handled grain, drove hard bargains, gathered rents, and sat as deputy in the local assembly. His wild ways, his dancings, his demon rides, and his drinking bouts procured him an uncanny name, and he was known in the district as 'mad Bismarck.' 'Aesthetic teas' were not at all to his taste, but he would

willingly gallop twenty or thirty miles after a hard day's work to a county ball. His cellar was his first care, and we find him bewailing the loss of one of his carts, with its load of 'three casks of spirits,' which had been carried away by a flood. A worthy successor at Kniephof, his Pomeranian estate, to that ancestor of his whose toasts were accompanied by trumpet-blasts and volleys of musketry, Bismarck often relieved his rural solitude by entertaining the boldest spirits from the surrounding garrisons, and he easily bore away the bell among a set of boon companions by whom the strongest-headed three-bottle men of a past era would very soon have been put under the table. He quaffed huge cups of mixed champagne and porter, he awoke his guests in the morning by firing off pistols close to their ears, and he terrified his lady-cousins by turning foxes into the drawing-room. With a character of this kind, it was surely no wonder that, having once plunged into an election contest, he 'emerged with the certainty that four voters were inclined to go in for me for life or death, and two more with a certain amount of lukewarmness, . . . so that I thought on the whole I had better retire.'

But this, after all, was only one side of his character. Revel frequently gave place to reflection, and parcels of the newest books, as well as 'casks of spirits,' were addressed to Herr von Bismarck. History, in particular, seems to have engaged much of his thoughts. Even the works of the sceptic Jew, Spinoza, which Lessing declared to contain all true philosophy, he studied deeply, and also pondered the maxims of Machiavelli's *Prince*. There are signs, even, that during these fits of solitary study he betrayed an occasional tendency, despite his healthy nature, to become slightly 'sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought'; but a potent antidote to this enervating disease was the stirring military life into which he now and then relapsed. By the laws of his country he was compelled to serve it further as a soldier, but the laws of his country could not have com-

pelled him to do anything which tallied so much with his own natural bent. On pretence of enjoying the agreeable society of certain young officers, he served for several months, in 1843, as lieutenant in a Pomeranian regiment of Lancers to make himself thoroughly acquainted with the routine of the cavalry arm, to which he was most partial. In the previous year he had also done duty with the Stargard Lancers of the Landwehr; and it was at this time that he gained his first decoration, for saving the life of his groom, who had fallen into deep water while watering his horse—a feat for which he received the coveted Prussian medal ‘for rescuing from danger,’ and this simple recognition of merit continued to be more highly prized by its wearer than any of the proudest orders of Christendom subsequently conferred upon him. But with all his love of soldiering he felt conscious of powers that would be thrown away on the army in piping times of peace; and the only thing for him to do, therefore, was to stick to his farming till circumstances, already in the mould of time, should shape his future path. Meanwhile, he sought occasional distraction in travel from the cares, and doubts, and dissipations that beset him—visiting, among other countries, France, England, and Holland.

By the death of his father, in 1845, the family property was re-divided between the two brothers; Bismarck himself receiving Kniephof, one of the three Pomeranian estates, and also the ancestral seat at Schönhausen in the Mark, to which he now repaired for good. For the next two years, therefore, he continued his country life as before, though not of the pleasantest, being much engrossed with ‘lawsuits, sporting matters, and embankment affairs.’ For he had been appointed District Superintendent of the Elbe Dykes, an unsalaried duty he was all the readier to undertake as its careful performance materially affected the state of his own property. That his thoughts, however, were not wholly taken up with floods and failing crops we see from a letter to his sister, wherein he announces his intention of ‘carrying

off your husband to a sitting of the Society for Improving the Lot of the Working Classes, to be held at Potsdam on the 7th March' (1846). Nevertheless, it was now his chief aim, not so much to better the state of others, as to ameliorate his own. We hear of his having been previously 'in love for twenty-four hours'; but about the time of his father's death he became alive to the terrible truth that he 'must marry, the devil take me'; and so, on the 28th of July 1847, Bismarck was wedded to Johanna von Puttkamer, the daughter of a Pomeranian squire. This lady was nine years his junior, and the ideal of a German wife; and a union was thus formed in which the most unscrupulous enemies of the Prince have never even affected to find the slightest flaw.

What chiefly determined Bismarck to reside in the Old Mark, instead of in Pomerania, was the fact, as we have seen, that he was made a District Water Bailiff or Dyke Captain of the Elbe, added to the certain prospect of his being returned to the Landtag, or Provincial Diet of Prussian Saxony—one of those eight so-called autonomic Assemblies, or *Zemstvos*, which were all the Prussian people had hitherto attained in the shape of representative government. Elected he was, too, as Knight's Deputy for his native arrondissement; and when, on the 3d February 1847, Frederick Wilkam IV., in all the pompous generosity of his divine-right omnipotence, deigned to decree the formation of a quasi-Parliament, consisting of the eight Provincial Diets of the monarchy, Herr von Bismarck repaired to Berlin as representative of his district. At this time he was in his thirty-second year, in the bloom of early manhood; of very tall, stalwart, and imposing mien, with blue-grey, penetrating, fearless eyes; of a bright, fresh countenance, with blond hair and beard—a singular contrast to the appearance of the bald and grizzly eye-browed Chancellor, after the fire of youth had gone out and left his thick moustache in ashes.

## CHAPTER II

## PARLIAMENTARY CAREER

1.—*Prussian Constitutionalism.*

At the beginning of the present century there was about as little representative government in Prussia as in Turkey or in Timbuctoo, and it said much for the comparative wisdom of her absolute rulers that they had hitherto not been forced by Revolution to share their power with the people. Frederick I., in 1701, placed the crown upon his own head in token, not that he had bribed and bargained it out of Kaiser Leopold, as was the sober truth, but that he had received it, without episcopal mediation, direct from the King of kings; and, during the whole of his reign, the sole Constitution enjoyed by his subjects was summed up in the maxim—*A Deo Rex, a Rege Lex*. The only Parliament ever summoned by his successor, Frederick William I., was the famous tobacco one; while the estates of the realm during the long reign of his son, Frederick the Great, all sat under the King's three-cornered hat.

That the solid political fabric erected by the hero of the Seven Years' War came to utter and disgraceful ruin within a few short years of his death was mainly due to the fact that his successor, Frederick William II., surnamed 'The Fat,' was too little of a despot to support it himself, yet too much of a tyrant to permit the legislative co-operation of his people. His follower, Frederick William III., while free from most of his father's degrading vices, inherited to the full his notorious incapacity to rule with the same absurd notions of divine right, and the same insuperable dislike to popular forms of government; but, while as much dependent on private counsellors, he was fortunate in being forced by circumstances, rather than impelled by his own sagacity,



to adopt the services of several ministers equally renowned for their talents and their patriotism.

Even before the death of the Great Frederick, the Prussians had begun to manifest a growing discontent with their enthralled condition; and early in the reign of his grand-nephew, whose evil lot fell on the cataclysmic times of Napoleon, there were signs that the patience of his much-enduring subjects could not be very much longer tried. The heroism with which, early in the century, the Prussian people finally rose in arms and expelled their French oppressors, forms the most brilliant page in all their brilliant history; but that heroism, it is certain, was inspired as much by the ambition to get rid of their own domestic yoke as to burst the bonds of foreign sway. Between the year 1806, when the monarchy collapsed at Jena, and 1813, when Prussia was again triumphantly purged of her invaders—the King was constrained to issue, among other municipal and administrative reforms, his famous Emancipation Edict. And what was its effect? On the disastrous battlefield of Jena the Prussian army had been mainly composed of indifferent and dejected serfs; at victorious Leipzig its ranks were filled with loyal and enthusiastic freemen. National calamity, strange to say, had brought personal liberty to the great mass of the Prussian people; and they now hoped that a successful effort to rid their country of an alien usurper might also win them a further measure of civil freedom. But they were disappointed. They did the heroic work demanded of them by their ruler, but received not the expected reward. Napoleon escaped from Elba, and Europe made tremendous efforts to abolish him. Prussia, too, as before, flew to arms; and the King, well knowing how the Emancipation Edict had acted on the courage and self-sacrifice of his subjects, now again promised them a written Constitution and a representative Assembly. Nerved by the golden prospect, the Prussian people again did warlike wonders; but, alas!

on returning home from France to receive their promised Charter, they beheld its already indistinct form assuming ever smaller dimensions, till it finally reached the vanishing point.

In 1840, however, when Frederick William IV. succeeded to the crown, it was confidently expected that he would redeem his father's honour, and vindicate his claim to be a liberal-minded King. Great hopes were entertained of a monarch who had talked with enthusiasm about devoting his life to the task of bestowing freedom on Prussia and unity on Germany; but the nation was again bitterly disappointed. For he had not been two months on the throne when he bluntly told his subjects that he deemed a Constitution unsuited to their wants. Though a vehement stickler for religious liberty, His Majesty still continued deaf to all demands for fuller political freedom. Soon after ascending the throne he had granted an amnesty, but that was not a Charter. He had called together a mere Committee of the Provincial Estates to discuss trifles, but the thing wanted was a National Assembly. And he had relaxed the severity of literary censorship only to bring forth an exasperating crop of pamphlets assailing the throne and clamouring for a Constitution. It was, however, characteristic of the King, who lived more in a mystic and mediæval dreamland than in his own realistic days, that, while the intellectual leaven of his subjects was silently but surely paving the way for the catastrophe which was to bring him to his senses, he himself was expending his fine enthusiasm on the restoration of Cologne Cathedral, on a mission to China, and on the creation of a Protestant bishopric at Jerusalem.

The King had visited England, and been much impressed with the parliamentary life of the nation, but only went home with a passion for Anglicanising the Prussian Church. He had in turn been visited by Queen Victoria and her Consort, who gave His Majesty sound political advice, but he still

found specious reasons for not acting upon it. At last, however, it became plain, even to his prejudiced mind, that he must part with some of his absolute power if he were to retain the rest. The literature of the time was already up in arms against him, and from the operation of mind to the action of mob the transition was swift. His best friends counselled concession, and a fanatic had tried to take his life; so, finally, more in reluctant compliance with the force of circumstances than with his own convictions, he issued an ordinance for combining the eight Provincial Assemblies of the Monarchy into one great United Diet, and it was in this quasi-representative Assembly, or baby Parliament, with extremely limited powers, that Herr von Bismarck took his seat.

It was opened with much pomp and circumstance on Sunday, 11th of April 1847, in the White Saloon, or throne-room of the Old Schloss (the St. James's Palace of Berlin). The King's speech was a true reflection of his character, and must have made his hearers doubt whether they were listening to the address of a prince or the vapouring of a professor. Such a piece of confused rhetoric, not unmingled with some little show of reason, was never heard. He promised, he threatened, he cautioned, he stormed, he scolded, and abjured God by turns; with one breath declaring himself the implacable foe of absolutism, and in the next almost vowing that, as the heir of an unweakened Crown, he was firmly resolved to transmit its undiminished power to his successor. His bewildered hearers were told that he would never have called them together at all had he in the least suspected they would misunderstand their duties, or aspire to play the part of 'so-called representatives of the people'; and he hinted that, unless they behaved themselves properly, and with due regard for his sovereign rights, it would be long before they got the chance of re-assembling. He descanted on the kingly great-heartedness which had impelled him to make such large and unmerited concessions

to the spirit of the time ; and, referring to the unwritten Constitution of happy England, swore that no power on earth would ever induce him to suffer a sheet of paper to intervene between 'the Lord God in Heaven and his subjects.' Other countries might be so situated as to thrive under such conditions, and he could only admire and envy them for it. But not so Prussia, whose political and geographical position demanded the continuance of that strong and centralised form of government analogous to the undivided command in a besieged camp.

The United Diet had sat for more than a month before Herr von Bismarck opened his lips in it, and even when he did rise it was only to reprove and protest. For he was one of those who looked with disapproval on the concessions which had been wrung from the King, and he was moodily resolved to do all he could to stay the loosened stone before it began to roll with irresistible force. In no European country even at the present day, despite the sweeping reforms of Stein, does the feudal feeling of personal attachment to the Sovereign survive so freshly as among the military noblesse of Prussia ; and about the middle of the century it was still stronger. But among all the steadfast vassals of the King of Prussia, Herr von Bismarck was probably the staunchest. All his ancestors had been so, and it was in his very blood. When, therefore, the People, that new-born power, boldly demanded something of the King which it sorely vexed his heart to give, it was as natural for the Knight of the Mark to spring up and confront the unfamiliar monster in defence of his liege, as it would have been for him in the middle ages to assemble his retainers and help him in repelling some covetous violator of the land.

From the very beginning, therefore, of his parliamentary life, he was the sworn King's Man, and in very truth '*plus royaliste que le roi.*' The appearance of Herr von Bismarck in the Speaker's tribune was the invariable signal for ex-

citement and uproar. 'Cheers,' 'deep murmurs,' 'great tumult,' 'stormy interruption,' 'commotion,' 'sensation,' 'oh, oh,' and 'loud signs of impatience,' were the only expressions used by the reporters to denote the effect produced on the Assembly by the knightly deputy from Jerichow; while most of the few speeches he did make during the session read very much like mere personal altercations with opponents. There was clearly more explosive force, if less parliamentary eloquence, in this man than in any of his fellow members. Indeed, his style of speaking was well described by one of his own party, who said that not only could it not even boast of bad orators, but of no orators at all. For the opening of the United Diet found its various parties as innocent of the art of words, as the breaking out of the secession struggle in America proved the combatants to be ignorant of the art of war.

A flood of light was thrown on Bismarck's political and religious convictions by a debate on the emancipation of the Jews. Many eloquent voices, it is true, were raised in the Assembly on behalf of the philanthropic intentions of the King; but there were still more who argued that the time had not yet come for such a sweeping social change. Foremost, too, and most emphatic among the latter was none other than Herr von Bismarck, who frankly confessed that his views were of the kind described by his opponents as 'dark and mediæval,' and that he still clung to prejudices imbibed with his mother's milk. Frankly and fearlessly uttered, it was little wonder that these views caused a Liberal deputy to express the great interest he had felt in actually beholding the 'narrow-minded, mediæval Spirit in the very flesh.' But Bismarck's opinions were too deeply rooted to be easily changed. He voted against every new privilege sought for the Jews, and the very last words he uttered in the United Diet, amid 'repeated interruption and signs of impatience,' were that 'he denied that their emancipation meant progress, as otherwise the Diet would have approved it.'

After squabbling for about eleven weeks the Diet was dismissed. The constitutionalism of the King had been tried and found wanting. He had given much, but his people wanted more. The former was infatuated, the latter resolved. The struggle between Crown and Crowd had already begun, and such a struggle could have only one result. Bismarck left Berlin in sorrow. He felt that a serious crisis in his country's fate had set in. But an equally important moment for himself had also arrived. For the Diet had not long been closed when he married, and, forgetting for a while his public griefs in his private happiness, he gaily started off on a trip to Italy. It was here that an incident occurred which determined his future career. Like Saul, who went out to look for his father's asses and found a crown, Bismarck departed on his marriage tour and returned, so to speak, with his blank appointment as a Prussian Minister.

Strangely heedless of the storm that was brewing around, Frederick William IV. had no sooner piloted the ship of State, as he complacently thought, through the first threatening breakers of democratic demands than, tossing the helm to his brother the Prince of Prussia (afterwards German Kaiser), he lightly leapt ashore and made for careless Italy. At Venice the King heard of Herr von Bismarck, who 'happened to be passing just then,' and invited him to dine. At this meeting, Bismarck boldly urged those reactionary views both on the Constitutional and the Unity question which characterised all he said and wrote at this time. It delighted the Hamlet-hesitating monarch to hear his own real opinions expressed by a man to whom thought and action were equivalent terms, and he determined to keep his eye upon him. But meanwhile His Majesty continued under the influence of musty theorists like Savigny, and 'masthead' counsellors like Bunsen.

It was unfortunate, however, that even those who were entrusted with 'masthead' duties in the State did not

sooner discern the rocks towards which it was rapidly drifting. The internal condition of the country was growing deplorable. Political disaffection was aggravated by social distress; and a responsive sigh of relief greeted the startling news from Paris, that the 'Citizen King' had been dethroned and the Republic proclaimed. The tidings acted like tinder on almost every capital of Europe; and Berlin was instantaneously fired as if by a train of powder which, extending from the banks of the Seine to the banks of the Spree—through Cologne, Mannheim, Munich, Karlsruhe, Darmstadt, Cassel, Hanover and Dresden—had successively exploded long-stored mines in each of these cities. The King thought to quench the kindling conflagration with a paltry pail of water in the shape of a promise to confer 'periodicity' on the Diet; but, alas! he was informed that a monster meeting in his capital had declared that harmony between Crown and people could only be secured by his granting constitutional privileges of a full and unconditional kind.

At length, on the 18th March, the crisis came. Frightened by the alarming success of the Revolution all over Europe, and by the determined attitude of his own subjects, the King at last promised the necessary reforms. The joyful news spread like lightning, and the populace streamed to the castle to shout their gratitude. The King himself came forth to harangue (as no one could better harangue) the mob; but in the midst of their joyful excitement the populace caught sight of troops within the castle quadrangle, and clamoured for their withdrawal. Bitter experience had taught them to distrust the word of their King. But instead of *retiring*, a squadron of dragoons with a company of foot *advanced* to clear the square; and, either by accident or design, two muskets were fired into the crowd. 'Treason,' 'Revenge,' 'To arms,' now resounded on every side, and in a moment all was changed. More than 200 barricades, defended by

infuriated burghers, rose out of the streets as if by magic, and the city was soon a wild war-scene of carnage. Morning brought physical victory to the troops, but moral conquest to the citizens, of whom a multitude had sealed their courage with their blood. The wavering King, who had repeatedly declared to imploring deputations that he would yield to reason but not to force, now at last gave way on realising the piteous calamity which had resulted from what he called a 'deplorable misunderstanding'; and addressing to his 'dear Berliners' another piece of that touching rhetoric whereof he had such boundless command, he withdrew the troops, dismissed his reactionary ministers, amnestied all political offenders, stood unbonneted on the balcony of his castle as the gory victims of his vacillation were borne past, with much solemnity and circumstance, in long procession to their graves; and finally, scarfed with a tri-coloured flag, rode through the street at the head of a motley crowd of princes, ministers, burgher-guards and barricade-fighters, one of the latter bearing the banner of the Reich, and another a *painted* imperial crown! It was little wonder that, on hearing of this procession, the Emperor Nicholas, who used to refer to the King of Prussia as his '*frère poète*,' exclaimed: '*Maintenant nous n'avons pas besoin de Légéard*' (a favourite circus rider of His Majesty), *je ferai venir Monsieur mon beau-frère.*

On returning, in the late autumn of 1847, from his wedding tour to Italy, Bismarck had settled at Schönhausen, the ancient seat of his race. Here he passed the winter in private seclusion; but he was roused out of his domestic reverie by the startling events of the spring. The days of March affected him less with surprise than with sorrow, and he had his own theory of their cause. 'The true motive power in the history of these days,' he said, 'was a mere lust of theft'; and all large cities, as being the hotbeds of covetous passions and of revolution, ought, he thought, 'to be swept from the earth'—an



opinion which procured him the sobriquet of the *Stadt-vertilger*, or 'Town-Destroyer.' For a man who spoke of the 'people' as an intangible body which possessed not the legal qualities of an individual, and had no rights as opposed to those of the crown, it was intensely painful to see 'national property' inscribed on the palace of the Prince of Prussia, whose attitude to the Revolution had been so construed by an infuriated populace as to cause His Highness to withdraw for a while to England. A lodge of freemasons had even thrown out of the window the portrait of the future German Emperor. Seditious placards arrested Bismarck's eye at every street corner. Amnestied Poles, Jews, and other rapacious gaol-birds ranted about popular freedom on every platform, and the whole city fluttered with Polish and tricolour flags. All this was humiliating enough to a Prussian patriot of the stamp of Bismarck, but it was agony to his soul to see the matchless troops of his Sovereign replaced by slovenly-accounted citizens, who mounted guard with an aggravating air of 'monarch of all I survey.' The people had already asserted their sovereignty. But firmly determined that he, at least, would do all in his power to shake it, Bismarck resumed his seat in the United Diet (convoked to pave the way for a Constituent Assembly), which had only four sittings (April 2-10), and which he afterwards characterised as the 'Jena of the Prussian nobility.'

In the Constituent Assembly, which now met at Berlin (in one of the royal theatres) to devise a Constitution for the Prussian nation, Bismarck scorned to sit, and it was perhaps fortunate that he did so; for, with the super-addition of so much combativeness as lay in him, an Assembly which constantly exhibited scenes that vied with the tumult of a bear-garden might have been tempted to come to actual blows. For six long months it sat squabbling and fighting. Nothing would content it. The King's very reasonable concessions were but as a drop in the ocean

of its demands. Ministry succeeded ministry—each more liberal and conciliatory than the other, but still the Assembly was not satisfied, and it began to behave as if it had been the legislative body begotten of the French Revolution. Mob-rule again reigned supreme in Berlin, and at last resulted in such excesses that the King decreed the removal of the Assembly to Brandenburg, the better to place it beyond the reach of democratic terrorism. But the deputies denied his Majesty's right to do so, and would not budge, till they were finally compelled by the bayonets of 'Papa Wrangel.' Nor was it to any purpose that the Rump Assembly afterwards met and declared it legal for the country, in the circumstances, to refuse payment of taxes. Very few had the courage to imitate, on slim authority of this kind, the conduct of Pym and Hampden, and all resistance evaporated in empty talk. But though driven from Berlin, a working majority of the Assembly could not be got together in Brandenburg, so the King at last mustered up courage to dissolve it altogether. At the same time he issued, on his own authority, a very liberal Constitution (identical almost with that of Belgium), of which the revision was reserved to the bicameral Parliament (the first of its kind in Prussia) summoned for the following February (1849), on the principle, as before, of universal suffrage.

These stormy six months had been a period of great anxiety to Bismarck, who passed his time alternately at Berlin and in the country. It was painful to him to see his beloved Prussia thus sucked into the whirling torrent of the time, with Democracy at the prow and Helplessness at the helm; and as the news of each successive outburst of riot and rapine reached him from the capital, it was incomprehensible to him why the King did not immediately clear the streets with one effective whiff of grape-shot. But, though scorning to sit in an Assembly of Democrats, Herr von Bismarck, like the courageous Dyke-Captain that he

was, did all he could in a private way to counteract and dam the roaring flood of revolution. A well-defined, cohesive Conservative party was not yet in existence, but he helped to form one; and he was one of the chief contributors to its newly-founded organ, the *Kreuz-Zeitung*, of which the chief aim was 'to oppose with force and emphasis the unchained demons of revolt, and to devote especial attention to the internal development of Prussia and Germany.' We have it on the authority of the first editor of the *Kreuz-Zeitung* himself, that 'scarcely a number appeared during the sittings of Parliament which did not contain a shorter or longer article from the pen of Herr von Bismarck,' and 'that 'in everything relating to the Chambers he was our best contributor.'

He was repeatedly summoned to confer with the King at Sans Souci, and on one of these occasions there took place a conversation which had a marked influence on his future career. The King asked him whether he approved his constitutional policy, to which Bismarck boldly replied that he could not say he did. 'Then you are not prepared to bear me out in all my liberal reforms?' 'Well, to be consistent, no, your Majesty!' 'What? Not even as a sworn vassal of the Crown?' Bismarck paused, reflected, and changed countenance. The King had touched his most sensitive chord. Yes, he would stand by his Majesty to the very last, even in the rash and hopeless adventure on which he had embarked. And from that day forth Herr von Bismarck became the King's Man for good and for ill, though less from conviction than for conscience sake. He had at last reluctantly accepted the Constitution; yet not so much that part of it which granted rights to the people as that which recited the privileges of the Crown, and the latter he now resolved to defend from further curtailment with all his might.

In the second Prussian Parliament (7th August 1849—26th February 1850) to which Bismarck was also re-elected

—but not without being stormed at, and even stoned by the mob—the revision of the Constitution was continued under the same running fire of criticism from the man who had promised to do all he could, to ‘re-knit the loosened bonds of trust between Crown and people.’ It was absurd, he reasoned, to point to the happy results of constitutionalism in England as an argument for its introduction into Prussia, as the two countries were otherwise so totally dissimilar in their historical development and social structure. ‘It may be true,’ he said, ‘that if we wish to swim we must go into the water; but I cannot see, all the same, why any one who wants to learn swimming should jump into the water precisely where it is deepest, simply because a practised swimmer can move about there in safety.’ England had a class of disinterested men who devoted themselves to patriotism and politics, but, without such an element in Prussia, Bismarck thought it would be highly dangerous to intrust mere ‘lottery-drawn majorities’ with the decision of weighty questions of policy, and especially with the purse-strings of the State. In thus arguing against what he held to be parliamentary encroachment on the prerogatives of the Crown, Bismarck was influenced by the serious belief that the King could do no wrong, or would not, at least, do so. The fate of the country, in his opinion, would be much safer in the hands of a wise despotism than of a foolish democracy. To him the ballot-box was only a dice-box. The quadrature of the circle, he said, was no less hopeless a task than the attempt to procure a representation of all the country’s interests, ‘not merely with the accuracy of a daguerreotype, but even with the faithfulness of a hasty sketch.’

These views he had expressed during the debate on the composition of the Upper Chamber, which he strongly urged should be mainly filled with a hereditary peerage, instead of by the elected representatives of an exclusive class of landed proprietors, as being the ‘best means of safely

steering the Prussian Constitution between the Scylla of a benevolent sabre-*régime*, and the Charybdis of Jacobin sway.' A chamber of hereditary Prussian peers, he said, 'would give the ship of State the necessary ballast, moderating, as if by helm and keel, the motive power of the sails when bellied by the breeze of the ("*Z-geist*," or) spirit of the time.' Of a piece with his glowing eulogy of the Prussian nobility was his panegyric of Prussian officers, to whose virtues, he argued, it was mainly due that the country had been preserved from utter anarchy and ruin by the Revolution. 'As a body,' he said, 'they were the envy of all war-waging peoples, and could alone, at the head of a reformed and augmented army, form the basis of a bold and glorious policy for Prussia.' He had previously referred to the army as 'Prussia's life-nerve,' and he believed, with Frederick the Great, that the sky did not repose more firmly on the shoulders of Atlas than did the Prussian State on its Generals. He was Prussian to the backbone. 'I never was ashamed,' he said, 'of being a Prussian; and in particular, on returning home from foreign countries, I have always felt right proud of being one.' It was this intense spirit of Chauvinism which made him regard the term *Junker* not as a word of reproach but as a proud title of honour. "'Whigs" and "Tories,"' he said, 'were also epithets which had originally a contemptuous meaning, and be assured that we too, on our side, will yet bring the name of *Junker* into respect and honour.'

## 2.—The German Question.

We have now said enough to characterise Bismarck's attitude to the various constitutional questions which agitated his native Prussia, and which found their ultimate solution, in spite of his determined opposition on many

points, in the Charter of 31st January 1850. It now behoves us to trace the course of his thought and action during these same years with respect to the larger problem of German Unity.

When the first Prussian Parliament was deep in its constitutional debates, a deputation of political notables from Frankfort waited on the King of Prussia, and offered him the Imperial German Crown. Liberty and unity, constitutionalism and federalism—such were the blessings longed for by the German people during the first half of the century. In the former respect something was accomplished, especially in the South German States, even in the first decade after the Liberation War; but it was not till 1830, when the July Revolution successfully aroused anew the dormant energies of the nation, that it seriously began to think of political cohesion. What their Princes could not, or would not, do for them, the people now seriously set about trying to accomplish themselves. But their efforts were at first small, isolated, and ill-directed. Rash and ill-advised like youth, the movement had even manifested itself in a miserable show of force against the Diet. In the troubled reactionary period which followed, the crumpled bud of nationality, so to speak, lay prostrate under snow, and it was saved from premature death only by the furtive gardening care of patriotic deputies in the various Chambers recently created throughout Germany, which acted like so many arks of free-speech in a deluge of despotism. In 1848, when the electric shock of revolution had again thrilled the nation to its core, the cry for a German Parliament rang through the land; and at last, on the 18th of May, the first National Assembly, elected by universal suffrage in proportion to the population of the various States, met in the Church of St. Paul, at Frankfort-on-the-Main,\* the ancient electoral and coronation city of the German Emperors. After several weeks of squabbling and fighting this Assembly finally agreed upon a Constitution,

and elected Frederick William iv. of Prussia to be its executive chief, with the hereditary title of Emperor of the Germans. The bells of Frankfort rang out the joyful tidings that a nation had at last been born, and away to Berlin sped a deputation—which included Arndt, Dahlmann, and Von Raumer—to deposit the Imperial crown at the foot of the Prussian throne.

But the hopeful joy with which they approached the presence of Frederick William was quickly turned into despairing sorrow. For thrice they offered him the Kaiser's crown, which he did thrice refuse. In the decision of the National Assembly His Majesty recognised the voice of the people, but not that of his fellow Princes; and without their concurrent assent, he said, he could not take a step which so materially affected their interests as well as his own. Bitter was the disappointment caused by this reply from a sovereign who had so frequently boasted his resolve to place himself at the head of a united Germany. To the poet Arndt, who had conjured the King in the manner of an ancient prophet to bow to the will of the people and save the nation, His Majesty described the proffered crown as 'the iron fetter by which the descendant of four-and-twenty sovereigns, the ruler of sixteen million subjects, and the lord of the loyalest and bravest army in the world, would be made the mere serf of the Revolution.' There were not wanting patriots who exhorted the King to 'descend into the lion's den, in the courageous confidence that God would help him'; but to these counsellors His Majesty only replied that 'he was not the prophet Daniel, and that he did not see the use of tempting Providence.'

Still, the King's refusal of the Imperial crown was only conditional, and though resolved not to accept it at the hands of the people alone, he at once set about seeing whether it were not possible to procure the assent of the crowned heads and free cities of Germany. Meanwhile, the Liberals in the Prussian Chamber disapproved the

step, as calculated to dash the hopes of Germany, and demanded recognition of the Frankfort Constitution, on the strength of which, as well as on subsequent approval by the German sovereigns, they moved the King to accept the proffered crown. To these demands, however, Count Brandenburg, one of the ministers, simply answered with a dramatic 'Never, never, never!'; while Herr von Bismarck, comparing the Prussian Charter with the Frankfort Constitution, and dwelling on the impossibility of their co-existence, described the latter as having been drawn from 'the profoundest depths of the wisdom-well of those doctrinaires who, since the *Contrat-social*, had learned nothing and forgotten much; of those theorists whose fancies had cost the nation more blood, money, and tears, in six months, than the absolutism of three-and-thirty years.' 'The Frankfort crown,' he said, 'might be very brilliant, but the gold which gave it genuineness must first be got by melting down the Prussian crown; and he had little hope that the whole could be successfully re-cast in the mould of the National Constitution.'

In the six months between the dissolution of the Chamber—which was followed by Frederick William's formal rejection of the Imperial crown—and the meeting of its successor, Prussia had not been idle in the matter of the German question. In particular she had with Saxony and Hanover formed what was called the 'Tri-Regal Alliance' for the purpose of creating a 'restricted union' of all the German States save Austria—who would, however, be invited to conclude perpetual amity with them—while another National Assembly would be convoked to settle the Constitution. In the Prussian Chamber, Bismarck acted as the spokesman of about fifty members of the Right who moved approval of the Three-King Pact pure and simple. Not that he was in complete accord with the draft Imperial Constitution serving as the basis of the Alliance, but he saw no reason why that should prevent



him from supporting a ministry which he honoured as representing social and political order as against democracy. Nor could he repress the wish that this was the last time the achievements of the Prussian sword would be given away with generous hand (he was referring to the concessions wrung from the Crown by the Revolution) 'in order to appease the insatiable demands of a phantom which, under the name of the spirit of the time or public opinion, stupefied with its deafening clamour the reason of princes and people till each grew afraid of the other's shadow, and forgot that beneath the lion's skin of the spectre there was only a very noisy, but very innocuous animal.' He pointed out that the attempt to engraft the proposed new Federal State on the German Confederation represented by the Bund would in all probability end in a 'quarrel for the Kaiser's beard,' and he scoffed at the notion of Prussia's finding compensation enough for all the sacrifices demanded of her in the consciousness of having pursued a magnanimous and unselfish policy. The policy of Frederick the Great had often been referred to in connection with the union motion, but Bismarck scouted the comparison. 'I am more inclined to believe,' he said, 'that Frederick II. would have turned' (for a solution of the question) 'to the most prominent characteristic of the Prussian nation—its warlike element—and not without success. For he would have known that now, too, as in the days of our fathers, the sound of the trumpet summoning all to the standard of their sovereign-lord has not yet lost its charm for the Prussian ear, be it for the defence of our own frontiers or for the glory and greatness of Prussia.' 'Prussians we are, and Prussians we will remain. I know that in these words I but express the creed of the Prussian army and of the majority of my countrymen; and I hope to God that we shall also remain Prussians long after this bit of paper' (the German Constitution) 'has mouldered away like a withered autumn leaf.'

The negotiations which now again ensued between the various governments in Germany revealed a woful want of accord on the subject of the national question ; but in spite of this, the second German Parliament, summoned by the King of Prussia, met at Erfurt on 20th March 1850. But was it a German Parliament, men asked, which only contained delegates from Prussia and some of the other minor States? The Teutonic tailors of Tooley Street, so to speak, had again assembled. Of this second Constituent Reichstag Herr von Bismarck was not only a member but also an office-bearer, for, as being the youngest of his colleagues—he was only thirty-five—he had to act as secretary, or Speaker's clerk. To the posterity of a hundred years hence • Martin Luther and Prince Bismarck will undoubtedly be regarded as the Castor and Pollux of Teutonic history ; and it is a remarkable coincidence that each of these heroes of the German nation made his *début*, so to speak, as a European actor, on the very same obscure provincial stage. It was in the University library of Erfurt that Luther first discovered the Bible, while it was in the church of the Augustines that he read his first mass ; and it was in this identical church of the Augustines that Herr von Bismarck, as a member of the futile Union Parliament of 1850, first gave clear indication to his countrymen of how national unity could, or rather could not, be attained. For his attitude was still sceptical and negative. 'Our watchword,' he wrote in a friend's album, 'is not Federal State at any price, but integrity of the Prussian Crown at any price.' •

The task of the Erfurt Reichstag was analogous to that of the Frankfort Parliament. But whereas the latter had dawdled over its work more than a year, its Erfurt successor went to the other extreme and rushed it through in less than a month. The former had allowed its constitutional cakes to burn till they were unfit for eating ; the latter had gulped them greedily down before they had seen the fire.

Bismarck himself compared its conduct to that of a 'fiery fox-hunter who takes a wall into a bog, without knowing how he and his horse are to get out again.'

He looked upon the whole proceedings as a farce; and he urged the substitution of the phrase '*Deutsche Union*' for '*Deutsches Reich*,' in order to make its collapse look less ridiculous should several of the allied Governments tear the 'net of fraternal German love thus suddenly flung over them.' President Simson, on assuming office, had reminded the Assembly that, exactly one thousand years ago, a Reichstag had met in Erfurt; and Bismarck (who was no less deeply versed in ancient German history than this famous jurist) profited by the allusion to show from old Spangenberg, the chronicler, that 'King Louis had held it in order to put an end to the extortionate practices of attorneys and pettifoggers who at that time were an intolerable nuisance in Germany.' And should its successor (added Bismarck, with bitter mockery) achieve a similar result, then 'he would believe that the ravens of the Kyffhäuser had vanished, and that the day of German unity was near.'<sup>1</sup> His soul was sickened by the complicated system of governing machinery, with its princely colleges, councils, and all the rest of it, under which it was proposed to 'draw the thread-bare coat of French constitutionalism over the unwieldy body of German unity.' 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'if you do not make more concessions to the Prussian, to the old Prussian spirit, call it what you will, than you have hitherto done in this Constitution, then I do not believe in its realisation; and if you attempt to impose this Constitution on this Prussian

<sup>1</sup> A reference to the legend which represents Barbarossa as sitting asleep before a stone table in a cave of the Kyffhäuser Mountain (in the Harz), and dreaming of the way in which he shall reconquer and reconstitute Germany. A shepherd having once been introduced by a dwarf into the cave, Barbarossa rose and asked his visitor whether the ravens were still flying round the mountain; and, on receiving an affirmative answer, sank down again with a sigh and a cry that he would still have to sleep another hundred years.

spirit, you will find in it a Bucephalus<sup>1</sup> who carries his accustomed lord and rider with daring joy, but will fling to the earth the presuming Cockney horseman, with all his trappings of sable, red, and gold. \* But I am comforted in my fear of these eventualities by the firm belief that it will not be long before the parties come to regard this Constitution as the two doctors in Lafontaine's fable did the patient whose corpse they had just left. "He is dead," said one, "I said he would die all along." "Had he taken my advice," quoth the other, "he would be still alive."

In the Prussian Chamber he had advocated a repressive remedy against what he called 'moral blood-poisoning' by the Press; and now, when the 'fundamental rights' of the German people came on for discussion, he urged that the utmost restrictions should be imposed on the right of public meeting, 'wherein lay the edge of those shears with which the constitutional Delilah clipped the locks of the monarchial Samson, in order to give him over defenceless into the hands of the democratic Philistines.' And no less sorrowfully, nay savagely, did he contemplate the growing power of a free Press, as he wrote at this time to a friend:— 'I cannot deny that, like Khalif Omar, I have a certain longing not only to annihilate all books, except the Christian "Koran," but also to destroy the means of restoring them. The art of printing is the choice weapon of anti-Christ; more so, indeed, than gunpowder, which, though originally the chief, or at least the most visible engine for overturning natural political order and establishing the sovereign *rocher de bronze*, is now more and more assuming the character of a salutary medicine against the evils created by itself—albeit, perhaps, in some measure it belongs to the physic-stock of that doctor who cured a case of cancer in the face by amputating the head.'

The Erfurt Parliament had no sooner done its work than

<sup>1</sup> The favourite charger of Alexander the Great, which none but himself could break and mount.

it was ostensibly adjourned, but in reality dissolved. The Frankfort Constitution had been elaborated by the people, and rejected by the Princes ; while the Erfurt Charter was drafted by the Princes, and also approved by the people, but allowed by the former to remain a dead letter. A mere castle of cards, it was blown into a thousand directions by the first reactionary breeze. The great mass of the German people were not at all disappointed with the result of the Erfurt 'tongue-tournament,' because they had viewed it from the beginning with indifference and distrust ; yet the liberal Press teemed with the bitterest abuse of the Prussian Junker-party, to whose narrow-minded patriotism and egotism was attributed the failure of the Confederation. Meanwhile Austria had not been idle, and the month of September (1850) beheld the attainment of her heart's desire—the resuscitation of the suspended or quasi-comatose Diet. Prussia was invited to resume her seat in it under very flattering conditions, but she refused ; alleging that she was equally bound by honour and interest to support the 'restricted union.'

Austria and Prussia had now revealed their trump cards. The secret rivalry which had long existed between these leading Powers now flashed out, and very nearly led to a collision between their forces at Fulda, whither they had respectively despatched troops, each from its own particular point of view, to deal with the Revolution, or rather rising, in Hesse. Here, then, at last, were the eager dogs of civil war straining in their leash, and to the Emperor Nicholas it was only due that they were not straightway slipped. 'I shall fire on the first who fires,' he said, and the Prussians were finally withdrawn, but not before a military misunderstanding threatened to precipitate the settlement of the great German question with blood and iron. The Prussian army yearned to show its prowess, but the King, who still clung to the traditions of the Holy Alliance, shrank from the thought of drawing the sword on

Austria, especially as the latter was backed by Russia, and supported by the most considerable of the German States. Manteuffel had been sent to Olmütz to make fair concessions, but Schwarzenberg insisted on complete submission ; and the usual diplomatic chaffering ended in the signature of a Convention which bound Prussia unconditionally to abandon all her union projects, to let 'federal execution' take its course in Hesse and in the Elbe Duchies (the former being restored to its tyrannical Duke, the latter to the kidnapping Danes), as well as to recognise the restoration of the old Germanic Diet under the presidency of Austria.

This, then, was Olmütz (21st November, 1850). Shame and exasperation filled the Prussian mind ; the Austrian heart swelled with pride. Prussia, who had constituted herself the champion of German unity, now stood convicted as the betrayer of the national cause, and all because a Romanticist sat on the throne of the Cæsars. With a brave and invincible army at his back, a full treasury, and a devoted people, Frederick William had submitted to conditions which Frederick the Great would have spurned after his regiments had been destroyed, his exchequer drained, and his subjects disheartened. The bloodless defeat of Olmütz had brought Prussia nearly as low as the bloody catastrophe of Jena ; but the former, like the latter, was only the degradation which preceded victory.

Bismarck, strange to say, defended Olmütz, and his motives for doing so were mixed. In the first place, he well knew that Prussia was not at all in a position to take the field against Austria with anything like the prospect of success, and he looked upon Olmütz, on the whole, as the lesser of two evils. It is true, he had always sneered at the various lines of policy which Prussia had now consented to abandon ; but above all things he was a patriot, and a patriot, too, of the martial type, to whom the honour of the army was as dear as his own ; and though he may have

rejoiced that the schemes of Prince Schwarzenberg had triumphed over those of Herr von Radowitz, he could scarcely have been free from a pang of bitterness at the humiliating way in which the victory had been achieved. It is certain, at least, that what he now defended as a blessing he subsequently vowed to avenge as a shame and a curse.

A few weeks after the Olmütz debate, Dresden became the scene of 'free ministerial conferences' under the patronage of Austria, which merely ended in confirming the Olmütz Convention of November, and in re-erecting the old Bund on the ruins of the national plans and hopes. The debating, the fighting, the bloodshed, all the promises of kings, the efforts of patriots and the dreams of philosophers, had come to nothing; and things had returned with mortifying exactness to the *status quo*. Bismarck beheld with apparent joy the abandonment of schemes which, however high and praiseworthy in themselves, were still incapable of bearing fruit, and the return to the loose Confederation of old. Besides, he was fain almost to hail the temporary subordination of the Hohenzollerns to the Hapsburgs as a certain means of rooting out the last seeds of that Revolution which had already, in his opinion, borne such baneful fruit. A man, thought the King, who was such a devoted admirer of Austria, and had such a high opinion of the Diet, had better be sent to it; so Herr von Bismarck was raised *per saltum* to the rank of Privy Councillor of Legation, and made secretary to the Prussian member (Herr von Rochow) of the representative Assembly of German Sovereigns at Frankfort. His appointment was the idea of the King himself, who, with all his faults, was an excellent judge of character. Even as early as 1848 his Majesty had been inclined to give Bismarck a portfolio, and was only turned from his purpose by those who held the Junker to be too unpopular, inexperienced, and fiery. But if his youth had rendered him unfit for the post of minister,

his training had been the opposite of that which qualifies for a diplomatic career ; and yet Bismarck accepted the appointment that had been offered him at Frankfort without the least hesitation.

His parliamentary life was now over, and the best introduction he carried with him to his colleagues at Frankfort was the reputation which he had acquired during this career : a reputation for unflinching loyalty to the Crown, and for a Conservatism which had been branded not only as ' mediæval ' but as ' antediluvian ' ; for startling originality in his views, and fearlessness in expressing them ; for a rugged style of speech which, though not eloquent, was persuasive ; for great fertility of resource in debate, with an impetuous mode of attack and a scathing power of reply ; for wit and humour, and a fertile fancy ; for an inimitable power of telling a story ; for mastery of the details of constitutional law and of military organisation ; for an extensive knowledge of modern history and languages, balanced by a surprising acquaintance with classic lore ; for high-souled honour, for burning patriotism, and for having in him the making of a great man.

### CHAPTER III

#### DIPLOMATIC CAREER AT FRANKFORT, ST. PETERSBURG, AND PARIS

THE Diet of Frankfort was the Administrative Council, so to speak, of the Germanic Confederation founded by the Congress of Vienna in 1815. But it was in no sense a Parliament. Its sittings were secret. It made no laws. Its legislative functions were confined to the voting of ordinances, and its executive power was so brittle and un-



certain that it sometimes even failed to enforce these. It did not contain a single representative of the various peoples of whose destinies it arrogated the control. The Germanic Confederation was nothing but a loose League of Sovereigns who aimed at preserving order in their own dominions, and at presenting a united front to foreign aggression; and of this alliance the Diet was the outward expression and organ. It rendered itself obnoxious to the nation by its invariable tendency to side with its own sovereign members in constitutional conflicts with their subjects. It winked hard at tyranny, and it required the most flagrant injustice to rouse it to any action against an established Government. But with all its faults the Diet contained some of Germany's best intellects; while in it 'every throb of the heart of the great Fatherland had its responsive pulsation, and nothing that occurred within or without its limits, having the slightest connection with national interests, passed unnoticed.'

The re-galvanised Diet re-assembled in May (1851), and Bismarck lost no time in repairing to his post. Like his first appearance in Parliament, his nomination to Frankfort was received by the Opposition Press with sneers and laughter. One journal called him a 'diplomatic suckling,' while another remarked that 'this fellow had impudence enough to undertake the command of a frigate, or a surgical operation, though equally ignorant of both. By his own colleagues at the Diet, on the other hand, he would seem to have been welcomed with about as much cordiality as that wherewith a dovecote might open its doors to a bird of strange and unfamiliar plumage. Bismarck himself once described the Diet as composed of a 'drowsy, insipid set of creatures, endurable only when I appeared among them like so much pepper,' and these creatures shook their heads at the unwonted sight of diplomacy being adopted by a man who, above all things, had never passed his final State examination; who had spent the greater part of his youth

and manhood among horses, cattle, and country farmers ; who was only a lieutenant of militia with one decoration (it was for saving life, not destroying it); and whose manners were still sometimes apt to be overbearing and bumptious.

But long before his colleagues could quite agree as to the character of the strange new-comer, Bismarck had looked them through and through. He had weighed them in the balance, and found most of them wanting. Pending his initiation into business he occupied himself in studying the diplomatists around him with 'the calm of a naturalist'; and, before he had been a week in Frankfort, his Chief at Berlin was in possession of a gallery of portraits, male and female, from the pen of Herr von Bismarck, which might well excite the envy of the literary limner. But while he thus began his career at the Diet by hitting off his colleagues, and telling how they gambled and drank, philandered, intrigued, and danced, he unbosomed himself to his intimate friends in a much more out-spoken manner. 'Frankfort is terribly dull,' he wrote to his wife. 'Nothing but miserable trifles do these people trouble themselves about ; and the diplomatists here strike me as being infinitely more ridiculous with their important ponderosity concerning gathered rags of gossip than even a member of the Second Chamber in the full consciousness of his dignity. I never doubted that they all cook with water, but such plain, barefaced water-soup, without even the faintest trace of stock, astonishes me. Send the village clerk, or the toll-keeper, here ; and, after they have been properly washed and combed, I will make a sensation with them amongst the diplomats. I am making giant strides in the art of saying nothing in a great many words.'

To a political friend, he also wrote : ' Under the mask of a roystering sort of *bonhomie* the Austrians intrigue, . . . and seek to play us out with the fiddle-faddle matters of form which have hitherto been our sole occupation. The

men of the minor States are mostly mere caricatures of periwig diplomatists, who at once put on their official visage if I merely beg of them a light to my cigar, and who study their words and looks with Regensburg care when they ask for the key of the lavatory. . . . With us (Prussians) each man sings his own song, slanders the others, and writes special reports to Berlin. . . . But if ever I come to stand on my own legs here, I shall either cleanse my field of weeds or go home again more than suddenly.'

It was not, indeed, long before he came to stand on his own legs at Frankfort, by superseding his Chief, 'about whom,' wrote Bismarck, 'I would rather not express myself in writing.' But his Chief himself had no such scruples with respect to his Secretary. For thus wrote General von Rochow to Herr von Manteuffel of the man who was to succeed him :—

'Decision of character, dignity and decorum in conduct, affability in social intercourse, a mature knowledge of human nature, prudence in language, the gift of awakening confidence and of acquiring respect, as well as experience of business—such are the qualities pre-eminently necessary for this post. The distinguished man, whom the King's Majesty in his wisdom has thought fit to select from a number of true and devoted patriots for so thorny a task as awaits him here, possesses such conspicuous qualities of mind and character, with other paramount useful qualities and gifts seldom to be met with, as sufficiently make up for what, perhaps, he may otherwise want for the moment in experience. He is beyond question an ornament to Prussian chivalry, the pride of those patriotic spirits who work unceasingly with courage and devotion for the splendour of the Crown, and for the honour and safety of the Fatherland. I do not even hesitate to assert that such a person is in many respects too good for this post, in so far, namely, as such approved qualities seem more especially adapted for energetic, independent action, for a very high position in the Fatherland.' . . .

'And is this Lieutenant of Landwehr,' asked the Prince of Prussia, who had just returned to his military governorship at Mayence from attending the opening of the first Grand Industrial Exhibition in London—'is this Lieutenant of Landwehr really going to be our Envoy at the Diet?' 'Yes,

indeed,' replied Rochow, 'and I think the choice is a good one.' Herr von Bismarck had previously come into formal contact with the Prince of Prussia; but this may be regarded as the first real meeting between the two men who were destined to co-operate in doing such great things for their Fatherland. With a State servant of whom so favourable a certificate of character had been given him the Prince of Prussia did not hesitate to cultivate a closer acquaintance, and he soon came to see that the young Landwehr Lieutenant was a man far above the ordinary level; while the Prince, on the other hand, was very much more after Bismarck's own heart than his royal brother, to whose failings, in spite of the loyalty which had made him shed a roseate light on all the acts of the Crown, so keen a judge of character as he could not have been blind. The King was a sentimentalist, and that only; his brother was a soldier, and little more. Frederick William took counsel of poets, professors, and constitutional lawyers; while the Prince of Prussia consorted exclusively with generals, and thought of nothing but army reform. The elder brother devoted himself to the creation of an 'evangelical bishopric' at Jerusalem; the younger to the creation of invincible battalions. Herr von Bismarck and the Prince of Prussia felt mutually drawn to each other; and between them there was now laid the foundation of that reciprocal attachment, that unique relationship of master and man which achieved so much, and which neither time nor intrigue could ever shake.

Until the publication of the official despatches written by Bismarck to his Government from the Diet, the best knowledge we had of his doings and sayings during the Frankfort period of his life was furnished by his letters to his family relatives and others. Characterised by a fertile flow of wit and satiric humour, of sentiment and fancy, as well as by great acuteness of observation and descriptive power, these charming letters—dashed off though they

sometimes were while the writer was waiting for an audience or for a train—entitle him to rank high among the best masters of that epistolary art which is now said to be semi-obsolete. These letters, recording as they do in a most charming manner his experience of men and things reaped while travelling all over Europe in his holiday-time, are naturally a true reflection of the man himself; but it is to his Frankfort despatches that we must turn to trace the course of his political thought and action during the same period.

Reference has frequently been made to his 'youthful illusions' with respect to Austria, but his self-deception on this score was not very gross. He had defended Olmütz, it is true, but only from motives of immediate policy, and with a secret resolution to 'eat the dish of his revenge cold instead of hot.' Certainly, at least, his 'illusions' never went so far as to content him with the prospect of his country remaining in a state of permanent vassalage to Austria. There is not a syllable in all his Frankfort despatches to show that. These remarkable despatches form an authentic history of most of the questions which then vexed the German mind; they mark the progress of the change by which Bismarck, from being the submissive party to a marriage of convenience—from which, however, he did his best to draw domestic happiness—became the emphatic advocate of divorce; and they show the clear beginning of that masterly policy which has rapidly converted Germany from a geographical expression, a bundle of conflicting States tied together with red tape, into one of the stablest, most formidable, and most respected Empires of modern times.

Diplomatic literature is not, as a rule, very interesting to the general reader; but in most of these Bismarck despatches there is an inherent charm which invites perusal, even when the subject-matter itself, as frequently happens, is detestably dry. For they are full of keen

observation of the world, of quaint and original expression, of strong common sense, of racy humour, of sharp but good-natured satire, of trenchant wit and masculine logic, and exhibit all the qualities of a massive and comprehensive mind. Their author is equally master of the familiar but forcible style of Lord Palmerston, of the terse and pithy narrative powers of the Duke of Wellington, and of the literary strength and sweep of the Marquis of Salisbury. These despatches are perfect models of reporting. Of all ambassadors, Americans are probably the best. With them, too, diplomacy is a profession, but not one that requires any preliminary training and outfit beyond the possession of an educated, open mind (with manners, if possible, in accordance), and a seeing eye. Their idea of the representative, or honourable-spy function, is the true one, as any one may convince himself by turning up a volume of their 'Foreign Relations.' Nothing is too small for them to make a note of. Nothing escapes their observation, and whatever they observe they report.

But no Minister of the United States ever used his eyes and ears more vigilantly, or reported more faithfully what he saw and heard, than did Herr von Bismarck at the Diet. He was thorough. No newspaper-correspondent could possibly have held the candle to him. He was the greatest tell-tale in Frankfort. Everything went to Berlin—from the ferreting out of the author of some obnoxious article to the denunciation of persons of doubtful antecedents, and of a Government which had converted a cobbler into a full-blown diplomatist. Penetrating observations on the state of the democratic movement, interesting news-items from the neighbouring Courts, the denunciation of blasphemous publications, anecdotes of distinguished persons, records of travel and of social adventure, sage reflections on the relations between Church and State—such is the kaleidoscopic picture presented by these Bismarck despatches. But of all these certainly the most interesting to the general student is

a sort of inventory of the characters of all his colleagues in the Diet. These personal sketches read like pages from Theophrastus or La Bruyère, and prove that their author had the choice of becoming great in politics or in literature.

During his parliamentary career he had always strenuously argued that bounds should be set to the freedom of the Press, and at Frankfort he acted on his convictions. A democratic print had compared the black-red-and-gold banner on the palace of the Diet to a 'virgin-wreath over a house of ill-fame.' Unfortunately for this ribald journal the honour of the body against which it never ceased to rail was in the temporary keeping of its Prussian Vice-President, who promptly informed the civic authorities that if they would not, within a stated interval, guarantee the Diet against the recurrence of such insults, he would be compelled to take his own measures. Meanwhile he asked the commander of a Prussian regiment, forming part of the garrison, what he would do if required to arrest the offending editor and possess his premises. The colonel replied that, at a word from the Prussian Envoy, he was prepared to seize, not only the foul-penned democrat himself, but also the whole stiff-necked Senate of the Free City of Frankfort. But to this length it was unnecessary to go; for at the instance of the Senate, which hastened to comply with the imperious demands of a man whom they knew to be terribly in earnest, the scurrilous newspaper was at once extinguished. At the same time its editor was soundly belaboured in his own house by two mysterious messengers of vengeance, whose employer it was impossible to discover.

We have seen how Bismarck, comparatively free from any 'youthful illusions' with respect to Austria, came to Frankfort with the mission and the hope of establishing parity of influence between that Power and Prussia in all matters subject to the jurisdiction of the Diet. Now, the first element with which he had to reckon in the attainment of this object was the fact that the thirty-four minor States,

with an aggregate population less than that of Prussia, disposed of fifteen votes to Prussia's one. It followed that, as between the two Great Powers, the predominant one in the Diet would be that which could command the suffrages of the petty Sovereigns; and it at once became apparent that most of these were in the leading-strings of Austria. 'In any case of divergence between Austria and Prussia, as matters now stand,' Bismarck wrote, a few months after his arrival in Frankfort, 'the majority of the Federal Assembly is ensured to Austria.' This was the state of affairs which made Bismarck counsel 'steadfast persistence on the part of Prussia in showing no consideration whatever to any German Government which does not take pains to deserve it.' This was the state of affairs which induced him to declare on various occasions, within the year even of his arrival at Frankfort, that, 'if the Diet, by direct and reckless enforcement of the system of majorities, attempted to constitute itself into a Board having for its functions the exercise of compulsion upon Prussia, means would be found to attach to this last bond of German unity a weight which it would prove incompetent to bear'; and that, 'before he could recommend the adoption of such a policy at Berlin, the question would have first to be decided by an appeal to the sword.' And now let us glance at the nature of the Prussian grievances which thus made Bismarck threaten Austria with an appeal to the sword within a little year of the time when he had affected to vindicate Olmütz, and before he had sat four months in the re-galvanised Diet.

Of these grievances perhaps the most irritating was a formal one, consisting in the persistence with which Austria sought to control the order of business in the Diet itself. By the Federal Constitution, Austria had the presiding seat in the Diet; but between the occupant of that seat and the Prussian member there raged a perpetual controversy as to the competence of the permanent chairman. The Austrian President was autocratic and overbearing, while the Prussian



Envoy was ever firm in his assertion of business privileges. Despatch after despatch went to Berlin detailing the 'register of sins'—one of these containing thirteen separate items—of the Austrian President. Violent scenes and altercations—sometimes even accompanied by the shaking of angry fists—were frequent. Baron Prokesch was the Austrian 'sinner' who sought to carry to the highest pitch this policy of presidential encroachment, and sometimes, when severely castigated by his Prussian colleague, he would affect to change his ways. 'Come,' he once said, 'let us forget the squabbles and sorrows of the old year, and commence a new one.' But the new year, which was to bring unison, only served to swell the 'sin-register' of the domineering Austrians. It was some consolation to Bismarck that, for his bold and manful championship of the rights of Prussia and of the minor States in matters of form, the representatives of these States often squeezed his hand in silent gratitude; but that availed little when their dread of Austria's vengeance made them truckle to her on almost all questions of substance affecting her relations to Prussia: the question of the German Navy, the differences in the matter of the Zollverein, trade legislation, the Press, the Constitution, the affair of Neuchâtel and the Eastern question, etc. Before, however, glancing at the motives which divided Prussia and Austria, on the chief of these questions, let us prepare our minds for the contrast by a picture of their apparent union on a point of foreign policy.

Bismarck had not been many months at Frankfort when Europe was startled by the news of what some denounced as an enormous public crime, and others lauded as an act of courage and wisdom. On the 2d December, 1851, Louis Napoleon, President of the French Republic, committed his *coup d'état*. How did Bismarck regard it? Should we not be prepared to find that the *Stadtvertilger*, or 'town-uprooter,' as he had been called, personally sympathised with the man who had drenched the streets of

Paris in the blood of its citizens? Was it not natural to expect that he, who had looked with pain upon the growth of parliamentary institutions in Prussia, should view with pleasure the gagging of the Assembly in France? Austria was willing, for once, to act in harmony with her rival, but still her recognition of Napoleon was not without an appearance of indecorous haste. A French journal published at Frankfort was enthusiastic in its advocacy of the upstart Emperor, and Bismarck strongly suspected that its articles emanated from the Foreign Office at Vienna. He determined to have certitude on the subject, and he achieved his object with characteristic skill. Conversing one day with the proprietor of the newspaper in question, Baron Brints, brother-in-law of the Austrian Foreign Minister, he boldly congratulated him on the direct relations he entertained with Louis Napoleon. With virtuous rage the worthy Baron repudiated the insinuation, alleging in his defence that the articles referred to came straight to him from Vienna. The intricate negotiations as to the recognition of Napoleon were conducted by Bismarck, who happened to be then acting as Deputy-President of the Diet, with great delicacy and skill; and at last the two leading Powers of Germany agreed to re-accredit their Ambassadors at Paris on the condition, expressed in the mildest possible form, that the new Sovereign would promise to keep the peace of Europe and observe existing treaties. How he broke his word, and what he suffered for doing so, will afterwards appear. ✓

It was from reasons analogous to those which had induced the two leading Powers of Germany to extend their moral support to the successful perpetrator of the *coup d'état* in France, that they combined to undo as much as possible of the work of the Revolution in Germany, and to combat what still remained of its spirit. However disposed towards Germany herself, Louis Napoleon, as the throttler of the Democratic Dragon in his own country, could not

but be hailed as a congenial Sovereign by those two German Powers whose almost single bond of union was a desire to counteract and nullify the republican movement of the time. But even as to the means of realising this desire, Austria and Prussia were woefully divided, especially with regard to repression of the Press and of political Societies. Characteristic of the relations between Austria and Prussia was their attitude to the question of the North Sea Fleet—‘a question,’ to use the words of Bismarck, ‘with which the Diet wrestled for almost a whole year to its own utter exhaustion.’

Under pressure of the Revolution, which it was expected would give birth to the Empire, the German Sovereigns, in 1848, had made a show of clubbing together, so to speak, for a navy which should defend the nascent Empire’s coasts, and there was actually called into existence an infant fleet consisting of a few wretchedly-manned vessels. But what to do with this toy armada, after its *raison d’être* had failed to be realised, was the burning question which vexed the German mind. Was it indispensable to the nation? Was it the property of the Bund, and if not, should it be declared to be such? Who was bound to pay for its maintenance? But above all things, to what authority did it owe obedience? ‘Austria,’ as Bismarck wrote at a later stage of the controversy, ‘aimed at acquiring direct or indirect power over the fleet, without having made any pecuniary sacrifices for it either in the past or for the future.’ The formal deadlock, to which the Diet was brought by its treatment of the fleet question, was well calculated to show on what an impossible basis it had been re-constructed—and to justify Bismarck’s remark ‘that Heine’s well-known song, “*O Bund, Du Hund, Du bist nicht gesund*,” etc., would soon be adopted by unanimous resolve as the national anthem of the Germans.’ Nothing could better illustrate the deplorable spirit of disunion which then divided the Sovereigns of Germany than the circumstance that their rancorous squabbles about the

national navy finally resulted in a decision to prevent its becoming the cause of sanguinary discord by handing it over to the hammer of the auctioneer; and the last we hear of this first abortive symbol of German unity is the sorrowful mention by Bismarck of an 'apothecary at Bremen' who had 'impounded naval stores to the value of ninety thalers, his wage for the rubbing out of ink spots.'

But divergent as were the aims of Austria and Prussia with respect to the naval defence of the nation, the question of its commercial policy revealed a still greater discrepancy between these two Powers. This was the vital question which agitated all Germany in those discordant days, but nothing would induce Prussia to yield to the claims of Austria, and Bismarck had an opportunity of dwelling on her determination to hold her ground when, in the summer of 1852, he was sent to Vienna to act for a few weeks as the substitute of the regular ambassador, Count Arnim. Bismarck was graciously enough received at Ofen (Buda) by the youthful Francis Joseph 'whose personality makes a very good impression on me. He is quick of apprehension, has a safe and circumspect manner of judging, with a simplicity and openness of demeanour that beget confidence.' The Kaiser, wearing a Prussian uniform, did Bismarck the rare honour of receiving him alone. Their conversation was rich in mutual assurances of a desire to see a harmonious co-operation, in all matters of German policy, established between the Courts of Vienna and Berlin; and at dinner even the Emperor whispered to his guest that, in the hope that King Frederick William would imitate his example, he had commanded his ministers to put an end to the unseemly attacks against Prussia in the Austrian Press. But that was all. On the Zollverein question Bismarck was as firm as Francis Joseph. The Emperor avowed his intention to adhere to the programme of Customs-Unity for the whole nation; while Bismarck declared that Austria, with her peculiar tariffs, would have

meanwhile to content herself with being left out of this Union. The Zollverein, he said, must first be reconstructed under Prussia, who would then be ready to conclude with Austria a trading-treaty which should serve as a means of paving the way for the gradual admittance of the Kaiser-State into the great commercial fold of the nation.

The Vienna Press wondered why Prussia had not sent an older and more experienced diplomatist to 'effect a reconciliation with Austria'; while, on the other hand, his attention was indirectly drawn in high official quarters to the danger which threatened his diplomatic reputation, and to the prospect of Austrian and other grand-crosses in the event of his making a favourable arrangement. 'In the face of such temptations,' wrote Bismarck, 'I cannot but compare myself with that Roman—Fabricius, if I mistake not—under the threats and allurements of Pyrrhus.' And, like Fabricius, he remained firm.

Nor was he less firm on a question of foreign policy which now began to engage the attention of all Europe. '*Cette politique va vous conduire à Jena,*' haughtily remarked the French Ambassador at Berlin, the Marquis de Moustier, to Herr von Bismarck, in the spring of 1855. '*Pourquoi pas à Leipsic ou à Waterloo?*' replied the latter, with a lofty look, which caused Monsieur le Marquis to complain to the King, but unavailingly, of the arrogance of his Frankfort Envoy. Who, in Heaven's name, was Herr von Bismarck, that he should dare to speak to an Ambassador of Imperial France in this way? The policy referred to by the Marquis de Moustier was the attitude of Prussia to the Crimean War, a subject which mostly engaged the pen of the Prussian member of the Diet between the end of 1853 and the spring of 1856. Bismarck, it is true, then only occupied a comparatively subordinate position in the service of his Sovereign. He was as yet more the interpreter than the initiator of his actions. But still his opinions had great weight with his superiors, and even where he had no

determining influence on the will of the Crown, it is interesting to trace the germs of his later public acts in the private views he then held.

The line of action pursued by Prussia with respect to the Eastern Question was not straight; it was, indeed, very tortuous, but still it was not the devious track of a rudderless ship or of a State which had lost its way. She well knew whither she was bound, and she was mainly guided by two great political land-marks—a desire, on the one hand, not to offend Russia, and a determination on the other not to be the humble and obedient slave of Austria. The two motives were closely related, though to Bismarck only, and those who thought exactly like him, was the connection quite clear. The King was unwilling to break with Russia, mainly for the sake of the past; to Bismarck the past was nothing compared with the future, and he already foresaw that the benevolent neutrality of her neighbours was what Prussia at no distant date would sorely require. For, if anything is clear from his Frankfort despatches, it is this—that there is a perfect unity of thought and action running through them all, and that they only, so to say, form the first chapter of a fascinating work of art whereof the author, unlike some writers of romance and even of history, had constructed a rough draft in his own large head before putting pen to paper. There was much more in what Herr von Bismarck said to the Marquis de Moustier than the latter dreamed. For, in truth, the Prussian Junker was already maturing those plans of action which should conduct Prussia to another 'Leipzig and another Waterloo, to a Sadowa and to a Sedan.

'The King of Prussia is a reed shaken by the wind;' 'the King is the tool of Russian dictation,' wrote the Prince Consort in the spring of 1854. But that well-informed and penetrating observer had not yet discovered the existence of a power which was beginning to sway the will of Frederick William as much as the mighty Czar himself. Bismarck

looked with anger on the arts of persuasion and menace employed to embroil his country in a ruinous war for the interests of others, and he has himself recorded that, if he had been the King, he would have repelled the advances of the Western Powers 'in a very decided and disagreeable way,' even at the risk of being excluded from the subsequent Congress of Paris, 'whereby Prussia would have lost nothing.' His attitude to the Crimean War was precisely the same as his standpoint during the Russo-Turkish conflict of twenty years later—one of strict neutrality, shaped by the conviction that neither Prussia nor Germany had the remotest interest in either quarrel.

About this time the King of the Belgians, who was naturally used as an instrument of the Court of St. James, urged anew upon Frederick William the necessity of going hand in hand with Austria, '*même au prix de quelques sacrifices d'amour-propre de la part de Prusse*'; and Bismarck was informed that the King of Prussia 'concurred in the views of a Sovereign and a statesman whose oft-approved wisdom entitled his opinion to serious consideration.' But Bismarck looked upon the 'approved wisdom' of King Leopold, in this particular case, as mere short-sighted selfishness. 'Had his Majesty,' he wrote, 'been King of Prussia instead of Belgium, he would have doubtless counselled otherwise.' His Majesty had declared that, in the event of Prussia being attacked by France as the indirect consequence of her Eastern policy, England, '*peu fidèle à ses anciennes traditions*,' would permit Napoleon, '*peut-être même avec quelque satisfaction*,' to seize the left bank of the Rhine. Bismarck effectually disposed of this threat by pointing out that the Power in possession of the Rhine would also be master of Belgium. 'Let England and King Leopold think of that!'

It were as tedious as unnecessary to detail the various devices employed by Austria and the Western Powers to drag Prussia into their service. They failed to do so. The

King was several times on the very brink of the precipice, but some friendly hand, not observable by the outer world, always drew him back. What is certain is, that the policy actually followed by Prussia before and during the Crimean War, with all her wavering and apparent duplicity, corresponded with the personal views of Bismarck; and there can now be little doubt that this policy was coincident with, because to a great extent the consequence of, these views. But who then dreamed that a certain Herr von Bismarck had already begun to mould the destinies of Europe? What European statesman then discerned aright the signs of the times? Well might the poor Marquis de Moustier feel no less bewildered than indignant when told to look out for another Leipzig and another Waterloo. For simply refusing to fight the battles of his neighbours, the King of Prussia was abused and bullied as if he had been the undutiful vassal of the Western Powers, instead of an independent Sovereign; but by the advice of his sagest counsellors, including his own conscience and his Frankfort Envoy, he remained firm. And every one is now agreed, to use the words of Leopold von Ranke, that his strict neutrality during the Crimean War was the condition precedent of the great achievements which afterwards made Germany one.

Bismarck and Louis Napoleon had already begun to study each other, and for this purpose a favourable opportunity was afforded them in the autumn of 1855, when the former visited Paris and became personally acquainted with the author of the *coup d'état* and the Crimean War. 'Hatzfeldt' (Prussian Ambassador at Paris), he wrote, 'has been kind enough to ask me to stay a few days with him on my way' (to enjoy the sea-bathing at Trouville), 'which will be a great treat to me, as I shall thus be able to see something of the entertainments' (given by the French Emperor) 'in honour of the Queen of England.' On which subject Sir Theodore Martin remarks:—'Several of the



guests' (at a great ball at Versailles, August 1855) 'were then presented to Her Majesty (Queen Victoria), among others one who was afterwards to visit the halls of the palace of Versailles under very different circumstances, Herr von Bismarck, then Prussian Minister at Frankfort. He is described' (in the Queen's Diary?) 'as "very Russian and *Kreuz-Zeitung*," and as having said, in answer to the Queen's observation, "how beautiful Paris was"—' *Sogar schöner als Petersburg*' (even more so than St. Petersburg).'

Sebastopol fell, the war came to a close, and diplomacy sat down to adjust the achievements of the sword. Prussia, who now wished to take part in the great game of politics, without having, like the other Powers, deposited her stake, came and knocked at the door of the Peace Congress; but she was only admitted after, like an importunate beggar, she had waited some time without. Much less apprehensive than the King about the dignity of Prussia, Bismarck was pained to see his country thus humbly suing for admission into the council-room of Europe, believing that she would have suffered no great harm by remaining out of it. But she was at last permitted to affix her signature to the Treaty of Paris; and shortly after that document had been signed, Bismarck embodied his views on the general situation in a paper of such brilliant merit that his editor has called it the '*Prachtbericht*,' or 'Magnificent Report.' And, indeed, it well deserves the name, for it is impossible to conceive a more profound and statesmanlike essay. The Prince Consort was a master at this sort of thing; but let anyone compare the political memorials of the Prince with the similar productions of the Prussian diplomatist, and he will see on which side lies the balance of depth, penetration, and practical sense. Some of Bismarck's observations have now the force of fulfilled prophecy, for he clearly foretold the two campaigns which drove Austria out of Italy and Germany, nor would he listen to any project of Prussian interference on behalf of Austria.

‘Every now and then for the last thousand years,’ he wrote, ‘and every century since the time of Charles v., German Dualism has settled its disputes by an internal war; and in the present century, too, this is the only way in which the clock of our development can be wound up and set. . . . *It is my conviction that at no distant time we shall have to fight with Austria for our very existence, and that it is not in our power to obviate this.* . . . And if I am right in this, though after all it is more a matter of belief than of proof, it is not possible for Prussia to carry her self-denial so far as to stake her own existence for the integrity of Austria in a struggle which I, for my part, cannot but regard as hopeless.’

Here then we have the first clear enunciation of that policy of ‘blood and iron’ which, ripened by the Crimean War, was destined to unify Germany. But if Prussia, for once, had succeeded to some extent in controlling the policy of Austria with respect to the Crimean War, the latter could about for means of avenging herself on her presumptuous rival. And an opportunity for this purpose presented itself in the serious quarrel which—dating from the revolutionary year 1848—had now become acute between Prussia and her Swiss *enclave*, Neuchâtel. In the autumn of 1856 the Royalists, in that Prussian province, rose and endeavoured to oust the Republicans, but the latter worsted the Royalists and laid them by the heels. Berlin, accordingly, from its far-off bogs and sandy wastes, imperiously demanded the release of the captives, while Berne, secure among its bastioned mountains, defiantly refused to set them free. Not by the representations of the Germanic Diet, nor by the advice of the Powers, nor even by the bullying of Napoleon—who was vexed at the victory of Democracy at his own Imperial door—could the haughty mountaineers be moved from their firm resolve. Conferences were held, ultimatums were written, war-loans were raised, armies were mobilised. If Switzerland refused compliance with the just demands of Prussia, the latter proposed to despatch a military expedition to enforce her demands; but Austria raised all sorts of subtle objections

to the passage of this army of retribution through the federal (German) territory. And for this policy of obstruction her motives were plain. Austria herself a few years previously had been forced to stomach much from Switzerland in the matter of her quarrel with respect to political fugitives, and she was anything but desirous to see Prussia adding to her *prestige* by bending the defiant Switzers to her will in a more successful manner than she had done. Again, Austria, who looked with a jealous eye on the growing intimacy between France and Prussia, lost no opportunity of trying to estrange two Powers who might one day make common front against her.

In obstinately refusing, as they did, the unconditional surrender of the Prussian Royalists, the Swiss were mainly influenced by the belief that Prussia would never execute, or be allowed by the Great Powers to execute, her threat of invasion; and it was characteristic of Bismarck that he never ceased urging his Government to take such measures as would undeceive the Cabinet of Berne. But his courage was tempered with a wise caution, and when at last Austria gave to understand that, before Prussia could dare to take the field, the Neuchâtel question would have to be discussed by a Conference of the Powers interested in the treaty-neutrality of Switzerland, Bismarck, to obviate the danger of a coalition against his country, counselled his Government to postpone military action pending the deliberations of this European Areopagus. France even, who had acted throughout in a spirit of great friendliness to Prussia, began to hope that the latter '*s'arrêterait à la porte qui conduit à la guerre*'; and accordingly she had to accept, with the best grace possible, the Conference of the Great Powers which met at Paris to avert war. In a brilliant despatch, brimful of the wisdom of expediency, he showed that—however degrading or disadvantageous it might be to Prussia—she had no choice but to act upon the counsel of the Powers, who would infallibly side with

Switzerland in the event of their advice being rejected; and it was a point of honour with his Government that the captive Royalists should at every cost almost be set free, without attain of life or fortune.

His Government acted on his suggestion. For a money indemnity, which he generously declined to pocket, Frederick William IV. renounced all his sovereign rights over Neuchâtel, and his royalist adherents in the canton were liberated. But the incident preyed deeply on the sensitive spirit of the King. It drove a nail into his coffin. From Marienbad, where he released his Swiss subjects from their oath of allegiance, he returned to Berlin, only to betray symptoms of that sad mental derangement which soon deprived him of his sceptre, while granting him a brief further span of paralysed life. As for Bismarck, while regretting the manner of the separation, he probably felt the same secret joy at seeing Neuchâtel severed from Prussia as thrilled the hearts of all Englishmen when they finally got rid of such a bone of Continental contention as Hanover. But nevertheless it added to his already long list of grievances against Austria, that this Power had done all she could to force another humiliation on her hated rival.

Shortly after receiving the congratulations of his colleagues in the Diet on the success of Prussia's policy in the matter of the Elbe Duchies—a policy which need not engage us at present—Bismarck was informed that the Prince-Regent (afterwards King William) had been pleased (29th January, 1859) to appoint him his Minister at the Court of St. Petersburg. For some time back he had been well aware that the inauguration of the 'New Era' at Berlin, under the Prince Regent and his Liberal Ministers, would affect his position at Frankfort. But what had induced his Government to 'place him in ice,' to use his own phrase, on the banks of the Neva? The answer is that Europe was in a highly combustible state, and the Prince Regent doubtless feared that the continued presence of Bismarck at Frankfort

would not be conducive to the pacific interests of Germany. Napoleon's famous New Year's message to the diplomatic world had gone forth ; Austria was on the eve of war with France and Sardinia ; and Bismarck had shown in which direction his sympathies lay by ostentatiously walking down the chief street in Frankfort on the arm of the Sardinian Envoy. Austria naturally wished to attack, or await the attack of her Franco-Sardinian foes at the head of a united Germany devoted to her interests ; but Bismarck would not hear of Prussia plucking the Austrian chestnuts out of the fire, and beheld in the difficulty of the Hapsburgs the opportunity of the Hohenzollerns. Now was the time, he argued, for Prussia to shake herself free of Austrian tutelage for ever, and accordingly he did everything he could to keep his Government from assisting Austria—in never so indirect and passive a way, even—in her impending struggle with France and Italy.

He had confessed his belief that he had no slight influence on the King (Prince-Regent) whom he had repeatedly tried to convince—and with apparent success—of the justness of his views, though the subsequent reasoning of other timid Ministers had filled his Majesty with misgivings. On the King going to Baden, accompanied by his Ministers for Home and Foreign Affairs, Bismarck hastened after him with the intention of continuing his efforts against intervention, or even the semblance of such, in favour of Austria. But whatever weight Bismarck may have had with his royal master, his Majesty was still more under the influence of national opinion ; and Germany was all but unanimous in pronouncing for the support of Austria against her French aggressor. The cause of Austria, argued the war-party, was a national one, but Bismarck was ready with his reply. 'The word "German,"' he said, 'instead of "Prussian," I would fain see inscribed upon our flag when first we are united with the rest of our countrymen by a closer and more efficient bond than hitherto ; the

magic of it is lost if one wastes it on the present tangle of Federal affairs.' He found it utterly impossible to breast the stream of the time, and by that stream he was swept into a quieter and less dangerous side-eddy at St. Petersburg.

He left Frankfort during the acute phase of the diplomatic period preceding the outbreak of the Italian war; but before quitting the post which he had so well and bravely held for eight long years, he embodied the results of his experience in a report of such elaborate length and statesmanlike wisdom as procured for it among Prussian diplomatists the name of the 'Little Book.' Of this he only repeated the substance in his oft-quoted letter to Baron Schleinitz, written a few days after the outbreak of the Italian war—on the day, in fact, when the Emperor Napoleon made his entry into Genoa (12th May, 1859)—in which he urged on his new Chief at Berlin the necessity of profiting by the European conjuncture to vindicate for Prussia her proper position of authority in the Germanic Confederation.

'In Austria, France, Russia,' he wrote, 'we shall not easily find the conditions again so favourable for allowing us an improvement of our position in Germany, and our allies of the Bund are on the best road to afford us a perfectly just occasion for it, and without even our aiding their arrogance. . . . *I see in our relations with the Bund an infirmity of Prussia's, which, sooner or later, we shall have to cure "ferro et igni,"* unless we take advantage betimes of a favourable season to employ a healing remedy against it. If the Bund were simply abolished to-day, without putting anything in its stead, I believe that by virtue of this negative acquisition better and more natural relations than heretofore would be formed between Prussia and her German neighbours.'

'Fire and Sword!' This, then, was the means of solving the German question proposed by Bismarck when he left Frankfort; and we shall see that his belief in the efficacy

of this, and no other remedy, for his country's ills grew in intensity till it expressed itself in another prescription of 'Blood and Iron.'

At St. Petersburg Bismarck remained 'out in the cold' from the spring of 1859 till the spring of 1862—in all, therefore, about three years; but unfortunately the despatches he wrote during his sojourn in the Russian capital have not yet, like his Frankfort reports, been given to the light. It is only from his private letters that we can judge of what he thought of men and things in Russia, and his estimate is invariably favourable; as indeed it could not well have been otherwise, considering that he himself was such a favourite with all classes of society, especially with the Court. To Bismarck one of the chief attractions of Russia was the excellent sport it afforded him, and he was frequently absent from the capital in quest of the elk, the bear, and the wolf. Clad in his furs and his seven-league boots, he looked like a pristine denizen of those dark Slavonian forests. 'I am only well when out shooting,' he wrote (March, 1862); 'as soon as I get into balls and the theatre here I catch cold, and neither eat nor sleep.' Once during the French war he said to his cousin, who was complaining of not feeling very well: 'When I was thy age' (his cousin was but thirty-eight) 'I was quite intact, and everything agreed with me. It was at St. Petersburg that I got my first shake.' Describing his ailments, his occupations, and his mode of life, he wrote to his sister: 'In this fashion I shall hold out a long time, on the supposition that I succeed in maintaining the observant standpoint of the natural philosopher towards our policy.'

The policy here referred to was the attitude of Prussia towards the Italian war (of 1859), which filled Bismarck with lively apprehensions lest his Government, after all, should be induced to draw the sword in defence of undeserving Austria. The news of the battle of Magenta (4th June) reached him at Moscow, whither he had gone, in

conformity, as he said, with the principle that 'change is the soul of life.' 'I should stay here a few days longer,' he wrote to his wife on the 8th of that month, 'but rumours are in circulation of a great battle in Italy, which will probably involve a great deal of diplomatic work, so I shall hasten to get back to my post.' On hearing of the disaster to the Austrian arms at Magenta, Prussia had lost no time in mobilising her army to be ready for all emergencies. Much to the delight of Bismarck, the Prince-Regent had said 'Nay' to the request of the Grand Duke Albrecht, who went to Berlin (12th April) to invite the aggressive co-operation of Prussia in dealing with Sardinia; but the course of the war had brought about a marked change of feeling no less at the Court of Berlin than throughout the nation, which now began to dread that France might ultimately turn her victories to account by attempting to seize the left bank of the Rhine, and even to re-establish a Rhenish Confederation devoted to her interests. The policy of Prussia was one of 'armed mediation,' and may be briefly expressed in the concluding clause of a despatch written by her Foreign Minister (Baron Schleinitz) on the evening of Solferino, and of which Bismarck received a copy: 'Supported by a strong display of military force we mean, at the proper moment, to bring the question of peace before the Great Cabinets, and to proceed with our mediation on the principle of seeking to maintain the territorial integrity of Austria in Italy.'

At the same time Bismarck and Count Bernstorff were respectively instructed to invite the Cabinets of St. Petersburg and London to concert with Prussia the basis of mediation, which would seek 'to reconcile the sovereign rights of Austria with the just wishes of her Italian subjects.' Russia seemed to lend a willing ear to these proposals, but unfortunately they were less favourably received by England, and Bismarck began to fear that Prussia, after all, would be implicated in the war. But his fears on this head were



suddenly dispelled by the Peace of Villafranca (11th July). Austria's inveterate jealousy of Prussia had been the salvation of the latter Power. Prussia had put her army in a condition to strike, if necessary; but it would only strike by order of the Prince-Regent, while Austria was for saddling its activity with conditions tantamount to her exercise of supreme command over it. The Prince-Regent was firm, and rather than accord to him the command of the Federal forces—which would naturally have increased the influence of Prussia over the minor States, Francis Joseph hastened to accept the moderate, yet humiliating conditions of Napoleon. Rather than yield to Prussia on a question of form, Austria would cede to France a portion of her own substance. Rather than risk the loss of her predominance in Germany, she would part with one of her Italian provinces. And yet Francis Joseph made bold to proclaim that he had been left in the lurch by his 'natural ally.'

Napoleon, on the other hand, declared to his army that its victorious march had been stayed by the threatening attitude of the Prussians. He had vowed that he would free Italy 'from the Alps to the Adriatic,' but he was quick to discern that he could not even try to keep his word without incurring the danger of having to fight on the Rhine as well as in Venetia; and therefore, like many a better man before him, he acted on the maxim that discretion is the better part of valour. There is, indeed, some reason to believe that, at Villafranca, Napoleon sought to reconcile Francis Joseph to his fate by dropping hints about a future coalition of France and Austria against the Prussia which was equally hateful to them both. In any case the Peace of Villafranca showed Prussia that she had made herself the dupe of her devotion to a jealous rival; but Bismarck consoled himself with the reflection that his country had not fallen into the pit that was prepared for it, and that the war had revealed military weaknesses on the part of Austria which, when the proper time came, would render

her expulsion from Germany by Prussia as easy as her partial extrusion from Italy by France.

At this time Bismarck had the reputation of being little other than the accomplice of Napoleon. Indeed, his official Chief (Baron Schleinitz) is said to have pronounced him 'too much of an idealist for the very positive art of politics, and an idealist, moreover, who wanted to drive Prussia *partout* into an alliance with the nephew of the first Napoleon against German blood (Austria).' The unity movement in Italy had re-awakened the dormant aspirations of the German people in the same direction, and the Government of the Prince-Regent was suspected of not being unwilling to purchase the assent of Napoleon to its schemes of national regeneration at the price of the left Rhine-bank, in the same way as the promise of Nice had induced the Imperial 'champion of oppressed nationalities' to espouse the cause of the Italian people. It was even insinuated that Bismarck had transmitted to his Government offers of this kind based on a Franco-Russian agreement, but he himself disposed of this calumny by remarking that 'if he had sold himself to a devil, it was to a Teutonic, and not a French one.' 'I will give 1,000 Friedrichs d'or in hard cash,' he wrote, 'to any one who will prove that any such Russo-French offers were ever brought to my knowledge by anybody. Throughout my whole residence in Germany, I have never counselled any other course than that we should rely on our own resources and on the national strength of Germany, which it would be for us to arouse in case of war. These 'quill-driving simpletons of the German Press do not in the slightest degree realise that, in attacking me, they are doing their best to undermine their own efforts.'

That Napoleon did in reality cast longing eyes towards the left bank of the Rhine, and hoped to acquire it in the same way as he had possessed himself of Nice, was absolutely certain; and his visit to Baden in the summer

of 1860 (16th June) resulted, among other things, from the desire to sound the ground in the direction of this rapacious aim. Yet the fact that the Prince-Regent of Prussia met the Emperor not alone, but in company with several of his fellow-Sovereigns, was rightly construed by the nation as a 'demonstration for the integrity of German soil'; and Napoleon had no choice but to disavow, in the most unblushing manner, his well-known design to help himself to a slice of the Fatherland. It was the first defeat which Napoleon suffered at the hands of the future Kaiser William; and his mortification found vent in his next speech from the throne, when, with that indignant air of injured innocence which not even the wolf in the fable could better assume, he declared that a great nation like France was not to be provoked by threats.

Following hard on the meeting between Napoleon and the chief German Sovereigns at Baden came an interview at Teplitz (July, 1860) between the Prince-Regent of Prussia and the Emperor of Austria; and Bismarck was filled with apprehension lest Teplitz should turn out to be another Olmütz. A few months after the Teplitz interview, the Rulers of Russia, Austria, and Prussia, met at Warsaw, (October, 1860) to discuss the European situation, and Bismarck was in the suite of the Czar. The Prince of Hohenzollern accompanied the Prince-Regent, while Prince Gortschakoff and Count Rechberg were with their respective Sovereigns. The Prussian Minister-President was in favour of his Government pursuing a much more energetic and independent foreign policy, and in Bismarck he discovered the likely instrument of its success. With Bismarck he now held several protracted and confidential interviews, sometimes lasting deep into the night. The field of discussion embraced the whole of the momentous political questions of the day, and a deep and indelible impression was made upon Prince Anthony by the Titanic character of his subordinate in Russia. He was amazed no less at the

daring and far-reaching scope of Bismarck's ideas than at the brilliancy with which he defended them, his perfect mastery of all details, and the evidence of careful deliberation that he had given to both sides of a case. Prince Anthony, however, did not immediately realise his wish to have the guidance of Prussia's foreign policy intrusted to this formidable and dauntless statesman. But he none the less enjoyed the credit of being the first Prussian Minister to appreciate the ability of the future Chancellor.

Soon after this, the death of Frederick William IV. (2d January, 1861) raised the Prince-Regent to the throne of Prussia as William I., and the era of Germany's regeneration now dawned. Matters of foreign policy receded for the moment into the background, and the German Question again began to occupy the thoughts of all men—but of none more than the new King of Prussia. Though still nominally retaining his post at St. Petersburg, Bismarck had already acquired such influence over his Majesty that he might now virtually be regarded as his counsellor-in-chief, and it was in this character that he was summoned to Baden-Baden in the summer of 1861. Bismarck's return to Prussia on business connected with the solution of the German Question was marked by his attendance at what, to him, was a very high and significant ceremony. 'I am really home-sick,' he wrote from Berlin (2d October, 1861) 'for my house on the English Quay with its tranquillising view of the ice on the Neva. We shall probably have to be in Königsberg by the 13th.'

What took him to Königsberg (the Westminster of Prussia) was the coronation of William I., which was solemnised with much pomp and circumstance on the 18th October. On that day the decadent doctrine of divine right received fresh assertion from King William, who, like the founder of his royal line, placed the crown upon his own head in token that he held this symbol of

sovereignty direct from the King of Kings. It was meet that, in Menzel's large historical painting commemorative of this singular scene, so ardent a champion of kingship by the grace of God as Bismarck should form a conspicuous object. But as the Prince-Regent now became a King, so did his Envoy at the same time bloom out into a new dignity. 'It was in the castle-yard of Königsberg in 1861,' said Bismarck once, 'that I first became an Excellency.' From the Castle Chapel of Königsberg to the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, from the crowning of the King to the making of the Kaiser, there was to elapse a period of only ten short years—a decade fruitful of more stupendous and significant events than had ever before been crowded into an equal space of brief historic time.

But even before he had been formally invested with the insignia of royalty, King William had already begun to sow the seeds of those events—and very prickly seeds they were, too, in the shape of bristling battalions. The mobilisation of the Prussian army during the Italian war had revealed grave defects both in point of organisation and numbers, and by the summer of the following year (1860) the Prince-Regent—every inch of him a soldier—had devised a thorough scheme of military reform. The pursuit of an energetic German policy was all very well; it was the wish of every Prussian patriot; but it was only possible with a vastly increased and more efficient army at the back of the Government. Still, while all were agreed as to the end, there was a most discordant difference of opinion with respect to the means. The Lower Chamber, in which the Progressist or ultra-Liberal party had the predominance, was willing enough to grant extraordinary estimates, once and for all, to cover the King's military reforms; but it would not hear of the new forces being made a permanent and incontrovertible item in the war-budget.

It was this divergence of view which inaugurated that

'Conflict' destined to rage with more or less fury for six long years, and expose Prussia no less to the danger of civil war than to the risk of disruption by the foreigner. At first the Crown seemed to have the worst of it. King William began to reap the harvest of that 'New (Liberal) Era' which had so promisingly dawned under his rule. The foes that thwarted him were of his own creating. He had a Parliament which was too obstinate to comply with the demands of his Cabinet, and a Cabinet that was too timid to break the will of his Parliament. So in March, 1862, the first stage of the conflict was reached by the dissolution of one, and the dismissal of the other. The chief of the dismissed Cabinet was Prince Anthony of Hohenzollern, and now again, as in 1860, he earnestly recommended the King to appoint Herr von Bismarck his successor. His Majesty felt inclined to act on the suggestion, and summoned his Envoy at St. Petersburg to his side. The King strongly pressed him to accept office there and then, but somehow or other he contrived to get a little further breathing-space before entering into the much-dreaded ministerial harness. Perhaps the most cogent reason, which he himself urged, in favour of a brief respite was the necessity for his making a personal reconnaissance in Paris before marshalling his forces for the grand advance that he had so long been meditating. Meanwhile, Prince Hohenlohe-Ingelfingen was made chief of the new Cabinet, which would do its best to impose the royal will on the Landtag with regard to military reform while the real 'Parliament-Tamer' was completing his training on the banks of the Seine.

To Paris accordingly he went, and presented his credentials to the Emperor on the 1st June 1862, but his stay at the Prussian Embassy was not long. To relieve the tedium of his tenancy there, he made a flying trip to England, where he confessed he would have liked to remain a few days longer, 'there were so

many handsome faces and handsome horses to be seen.' This compliment to the attractions of Hyde Park is quoted from a letter of Bismarck's to his wife, describing his impressions of London during the time of the Exhibition. Though his stay there only lasted a few days he made the very best of his opportunities, and even turned his attention to the social condition of the working classes. Nor did he fail to see and converse with some of the political chiefs of the hour. The Prince-Consort, who always keenly watched the course of German politics, had died in the previous December; and the man who, after him, probably knew most of continental affairs, was Lord Palmerston.

The Premier was anything but an ardent admirer of Prussia, but he listened to the talk of her representative in Paris, and had his own thoughts about it. And so also did England's great 'Imperial Minister' to be (then the Chief of the Opposition), to whom Bismarck was introduced by Baron Brunnow at the Russian Embassy. To Mr. Disraeli the Prussian Envoy unbosomed himself in a tale which the great Tory Leader hesitated not to describe as the 'mere moonshine of a German Baron.' Bismarck's frankly expressed views about the regeneration of Germany were regarded by Mr. Disraeli with much the same smiling commiseration as the world had accorded to the writer of 'Alroy's' own romancing about the repatriation of the Jews. For the rest, the two statesmen were favourably impressed with each other; and thus, between minds so essentially different in structure, yet so similar in some of their methods, there was laid the foundation of that sympathy which was destined to have a subtle but decided influence on European affairs, and to find open expression in the singular drama of after years to be known as the Congress of Berlin.)

From June till September, Bismarck's stay in Paris merely resembled the summer sojourn of a swallow; and,

like a swallow, he flew about, revelling in the beauties of *la belle France*, of that lovely France which his policy was still to strew with havoc and desolation. From Toulouse he wrote: 'I have roamed through mountains and woods in happy forgetfulness of the world, and am a little oppressed to find myself for the first time in a large town again.' But this happy forgetfulness of the world and all its cares was now for him at an end, and would never soothe his soul again. The swallow's summer was over. Bismarck's *Wanderjahre* were done. For into this fascinating fairy-land of 'Mendelssohn and moonlight,' snow-clad mountains and thundering waterfalls, dark-eyed Spanish beauties and pellucid-azure seas—there was now flashed an electric spark which suddenly transformed it, as if by the mechanism of a dissolving view, into a prospect of bare reality among the unromantic wastes of Brandenburg.

While deep in the oblivious valleys of the Pyrenees, Bismarck was overtaken by a telegram from King William summoning him at once to Berlin. The Chamber had again been riding rough-shod over His Majesty's schemes of army reform, and his Cabinet had once more proved itself incompetent to bend or break the popular will. Travelling post-haste, Bismarck arrived in Berlin on the 19th September, in time to witness part of the seven days' debate which ended, on the 23d, by the Chamber refusing to vote the military estimates as laid before it by the Crown. To this vote the King answered by immediately appointing Bismarck President of his Ministry.

Returning to Paris towards the end of October for the purpose of presenting to Napoleon his letters of recall, Bismarck was received by the Emperor at St. Cloud, in those very rooms where Charles x. had signed the 'July Ordinances' which proved so fatal to his throne; and, aware of the task on which Bismarck was about to enter at Berlin, His Majesty made bold to advise him 'not to forget the fate of Polignac.'



## CHAPTER IV

## THE 'CONFLICT-TIME'

*Wars with Denmark and Austria*

'Who in Heaven's name is Herr von Bismarck, that he should be placed in such a high station?' most people in Prussia began to ask. '*Bismarck—c'est le Coup d'État,*' was the ready reply of the Liberal Press, which greeted his advent to power with a storm of abuse, calling him a 'swaggering Junker,' a 'hollow braggart,' a 'Napoleon-worshipper,' and a 'town-uprooter.' It had lost sight of him to a great extent for the last ten years, but now his words and acts during the revolutionary period were raked up against him, as a previous conviction is rooted out to aggravate a new indictment. King William heeded not at all the great unpopularity of his choice of a Prime and Foreign Minister, knowing that, by the Constitution the appointment of his Cabinet lay with himself alone, and not with his Parliament. The King had boundless confidence in the man into whose hands he now committed the helm of affairs. '*Voilà mon médecin,*' His Majesty, pointing to Bismarck, is said to have replied to a Russian princess who complimented him on the improvement of his looks.

The main cause of the quarrel between Crown and country was that they were really at sixes and sevens. They misunderstood each other, and the worst of it was that Bismarck could not talk of his secret schemes without imperilling their success; while the Chamber, uninitiated in the moves of diplomacy, could not be expected to sanction the maintenance of an army for which it saw no apparent use. The deputies were aware of Bismarck's hostility to Austria; but they argued that Prussia only required to raise high the banner of Liberalism to secure her the sympathy of all the minor States, and the hegemony in Germany.

Bismarck thought very differently. 'It is not,' he said, a few days after his accession to power, 'it is not by speechifying and majorities that the great questions of the time will have to be decided—that was the mistake made in 1848 and 1849—but by *blood and iron*.' 'I brought this olive twig with me from Avignon,' he further said, 'to offer to the popular party as a token of peace; but I see it is not yet time for that.' That the army, as re-organised by the King, should remain undiminished by a single man he was sternly resolved; and no power on earth—not the fierce hatred and opposition of most of his countrymen, not the adverse opinion of Europe, not the threat of impeachment, not the fear of endangering the Crown whereof he was the sworn slave and vassal, not even the prospect of exile or the scaffold—could shake him in his firm-set purpose! 'What matter,' he said to the liberally-inclined Crown Prince, 'what matter if they hang me, provided the rope by which they string me up bind this new Germany more firmly to your throne?'

For four long years the conflict between Crown and Parliament raged. Bismarck's attitude was at first conciliatory, but he soon found that the Chamber, like Shylock, insisted on having its pound of flesh. Nothing would induce it to grant supplies for the re-organised army; and neither the King nor the Upper House, on their side, would sanction any figures which did not include *all* the military estimates. The consequence was that the Government, acting on the assumption that in this case right was on the side of might, ruled without a budget. Stormy were the scenes and fierce the excitement which this theory, boldly acted on as it was, produced in the Chamber and throughout the nation; but Bismarck remained as firm and immovable as a '*rocher de bronze*.' He had the conviction of a Luther, and, like a Luther, nothing could daunt or shake him.

In the Chamber debates he was contemptuous but never

angry, cutting and sarcastic without being coarse; and his social accomplishments gave him a great advantage over his opponents, in whom over-education contrasted strongly with under-breeding. He was as cool under parliamentary fire as the Duke of Wellington ever was under a hail of bullets; and when the doctrinaires and the professors, who were the curse of the Chamber, were thundering against him about tyranny, revolution, impeachment, and all the rest of it, he would calmly sit down before them to write a chatty letter to his wife, or to thank his sister for a present of sausages and black puddings. But the spirit of opposition in both parties soon degenerated into a habit of aggression, and from quarrelling about the Constitution they began to wrangle about the rules of debate. When once reminded by the President of the irrelevancy of his remarks, Bismarck haughtily replied that he was wholly above the disciplinary power of the chair, and that in all he said or did he acknowledged no master but the King. A violent scene ensued, but it was surpassed some time afterwards by the storm similarly raised by General von Roon. 'Thus far, and no further,' exclaimed the Minister of War, in a climax of passion, pointing to the gangway before his bench, 'can the authority of the President come.' In another instant Bockum-Dolffs, the President, had put on his hat, which, like the extinguisher of a candle, was symbolically used for snuffing out the flame of parliamentary eloquence and suspending the sitting; but, lo! either by malice or mistake, the beaver that was brought him proved much too big, and down it dropped over his very nose. The curtain thus fell on one act of the tragi-comedy amid explosions of wrath and roars of laughter. But famous and far-shining in Prussian annals is the story of Bockum-Dolffs and his over-sized hat.

Bismarck was now the best-hated man in Prussia, as he afterwards declared he had come to be in Europe. He was vehemently denounced in the Chamber; in the Press

he was assailed with bitter malignity. He was compared with Catiline, with Strafford, and with Polignac; by one deputy described as a Don Quixote, by another as a tight-rope dancer, and by a third as a double-faced traitor in league with Napoleon. 'Travelling,' he wrote to his wife in July 1863, 'agrees with me capitally; but it is very annoying to be stared at like a Japanese at every station. It is all over now with *incognito* and its comforts until the day comes when I, like others before me, shall have disappeared, and some one else has the advantage of being the object of general ill-will.'

King William's new Foreign Minister had not been many weeks at his post before he had a fine opportunity of showing the stuff that was in him. In January 1863 an insurrection broke out in Poland of which the extent and suddenness took the ruling powers at St. Petersburg fairly aback, and, in fact, they began to show signs of having lost their heads. A word from a calm and vigilant observer at Berlin helped to restore their self-possession. From his long residence in St. Petersburg, Bismarck was well acquainted generally with Russian affairs. He knew that there was a paralysing difference of opinion among the political doctors on the Neva as to the proper cure of the malady that had broken out upon the Vistula; and meanwhile the flames of rebellion, fanned by sympathetic breezes from the West, threatened to spread and seize upon contiguous Posen. But the part he now played has been strangely misrepresented by most writers. For, in accounts of the Polish drama, it has hitherto been the fashion to describe Prussia as the timid and obsequious tool of a threatening neighbour. The truth, indeed, is that at this time St. Petersburg was very much the docile pupil of Berlin. As soon as ever the Polish rising had assumed dimensions no less dangerous to Prussia than to Russia, Bismarck himself took the initiative by inquiring of Prince Gortschakoff whether his Government would not be inclined

to take measures with Prussia for combating the common peril. The Russian Chancellor was only too eager to accept the proposal, and in February the two Governments signed a Convention authorising the troops of each nation to cross their respective frontiers, if need be, in pursuit of fugitive rebels. This assumed, of course, that the Poles of Prussia might be tempted to rise and join their Russian brethren, and their was ground enough, it must be admitted, for the fear.

The precautionary policy of Bismarck aroused the deepest indignation in the Chamber, but to him its best justification was the fact that none were more uncompromising in their opposition than the Polish deputies themselves. One of them even went the length of proposing that all the Slavonic subjects of the Prussian Crown should be ceded in favour of an independent Poland. Not less vehement, of course, as hostile critics, were the Progressists, who exhausted all their copious store of argument and abuse on a subject which Bismarck contemptuously called the 'sea-serpent of the European Press.' By one deputy he was described as a 'Don Quixote' and 'a tight-rope dancer'; another compared him with Catiline; a third drew a parallel between the mobilisation of part of the Prussian army and the sale and shipment of Hessian troops to America in the previous century; while a fourth avowed that, if the Government got into trouble with any foreign Power in consequence of what it had done, Parliament would not grant it a single groschen for the maintenance of its quarrel. As Bismarck himself afterwards said, he had at this time 'to face a whole world of wrath and hatred'; yet he remained immovably firm in the conviction that he would have been a traitor to his country's interests had he acted otherwise.

But the main significance of Bismarck's attitude to the Polish rising was the effect it produced out of Prussia itself. When in that country there was a numerous and

influential party which openly denounced the measures taken by their Government against the spread of the insurrection, it was not to be wondered at that Western Europe, especially England and France, should warmly espouse the cause of the unhappy Poles. Lord John Russell, it is true, declined the invitation of France to join with her and Austria in addressing a Note of remonstrance to the Prussian Government; but he instructed Sir Andrew Buchanan to inform Herr von Bismarck of the indignation aroused in England by Prussia's 'unjustifiable intervention,' and to demand a copy of the Convention. To this Bismarck calmly replied that, in the circumstances, there was no occasion for him to give anything of the kind. The haughty powers of Downing Street had not yet rightly read the character of the new man at the helm of affairs in Prussia.

Fortified with the diplomatic support of France and Austria, England hastened to press upon Russia a scheme of Polish reform which, if analogously recommended to England by Russia with respect to Ireland, would have aroused a storm of wrathful protest throughout the length and breadth of the British Empire. Thrice was Russia almost threateningly invited to adopt the advice of the Powers, and thrice, certain of her Prussian neighbour, she disdainfully refused. France and Austria at last fell away from England, who made a fourth representation at St. Petersburg, and then the matter was ingloriously dropped. The insurrection was suppressed, but it was not suppressed until after ten thousand of Poland's bravest sons had been slaughtered, or sent to Siberia, by that 'icy-hearted Muscovite,' Mouravieff. Nor can it for a moment be doubted that to England and her humanitarian co-operators was largely due the extent of this national disaster. For, after all chance of military success was gone, the courage of the insurgents was sustained by the ill-founded hope of active intervention from the West, which never came. On

seeing, at last, that nothing but 'words, words' was to be expected from the diplomatic champions of liberty, their spirits sank, their resistance collapsed, and the flames of their rebellion were quenched in blood. But the Polish incident had proved to astonished Europe that, in treating with Prussia, it had to deal with a very different Power from what the leading German State had been ever since the death of Frederick the Great. Hitherto, Bismarck's action had been confined to Germany. The Polish incident now enabled him to make his appearance on the European stage; and the public could only say that, whatever the merits of the new actor, his style was one with which they were not at all familiar. Here was a man who, hated, opposed, and suspected in his own country, and with scarcely a friend but his Sovereign, nevertheless had the courage to say contemptuous 'Nay' to the proudest nations of Europe, and to go his own wilful way, fearless of consequences.

To Napoleon, Bismarck had never made any secret of his intentions with respect to Austria; and he had not been many weeks at the helm of affairs before he began the task of translating his ideas into acts—a task which was rendered all the more difficult by his being simultaneously engrossed with the labour of breaking the will of Parliament. 'The relations of the two Powers,' said Bismarck to the Austrian Ambassador, 'cannot continue on their present footing. They must change either for the better or the worse. It is the honest desire of the King's Government that they should change for the better, but if the necessary advances are not made by the Imperial Cabinet, it will be requisite for Prussia to look the other alternative in the face, and to make her preparations accordingly.' 'Finally,' wrote Count Karolyi, a few weeks later, 'Bismarck placed before us, in so many words, the alternative of withdrawing from Germany and transferring our centre of gravity to Ofen (Buda), or of seeing Prussia in the ranks of our enemies on the occasion of the first European war.'

Here was a splendid specimen of that habit of plain-speaking which has ever been the peculiarity and strength of Bismarck. It was the result of Austria's persistent endeavours to ignore the tacit agreement in virtue of which 'Austria was secure of Prussia's support in European questions, whilst yielding a free field to Prussia in her German politics.' Feigning a zeal for Federal reform, Austria had come forward with the so-called 'Delegate Scheme'—a project which, emanating from the brain of the Saxon Minister, Count Beust, was nothing more than a plan to convoke a sort of National Assembly, with deliberative powers only, composed of delegates from the Chambers of the various States. The statesman who was ruling without a budget perceived the futility of this 'half-measure,' and met it with the startling proposal of a regular German Parliament. But he had also formal reasons for opposing the project, seeing that, contrary to custom, it had been introduced without the previous assent of Prussia; and he intimated that, if the Diet again attempted to overstep its legitimate powers in the matter, he would at once withdraw the Prussian representative in it, and cease to recognise its authority. This was language to which the somnolent assembly in the Thurn-and-Taxis Palace was quite unaccustomed, but it came from Herr von Bismarck, and most of the members still remembered what sort of a man *he* was. Soon after this a Congress of Princes held at Frankfurt under the influence of Austria hastened to approve the Federal Reform Act put forward by that State, and sent it to King William who had refused to attend their deliberations with the implied alternative of acquiescence in or exclusion from the new organisation. The great *querelle d'Allemand* about the Emperor's beard seemed to be ripening fast. Things, indeed, looked very black. 'It wants a humble confidence in God,' wrote Bismarck, 'not to despair of the future of our country.' Bismarck did have this confidence in God, in addition to which he firmly



believed in himself and in the big battalions of his royal master. That these battalions would soon have to take the field he did not for a moment doubt, and suddenly there occurred an event which set them marching sooner even than he expected.

On 15th November, 1863, King Frederick VII. of Denmark died, and with his death the Schleswig-Holstein question again burst upon distracted Europe—that question which Prince Metternich said was ‘the bone on which the Germans were whetting their teeth,’ which Lord Palmerston described as a ‘match that would set Europe on fire,’ which an irreverent Frenchman vowed would remain even after the heavens and the earth had passed away, and which Bismarck himself declared could furnish matter for a ‘play representing the intrigues of diplomacy.’ ‘When I was made a Prince,’ said the Chancellor once, ‘the King insisted upon putting Alsace-Lorraine into my coat of arms. But I would much rather have had Schleswig-Holstein; that is the campaign, politically speaking, of which I am proudest.’

Frederick VII. died, and the burning question arose—Who was to reign in his stead? Not over the Danish Kingdom pure and simple, for that was clear enough; but over the two provinces of Schleswig and Holstein which had long been attached to it by a sort of personal or dynastic relationship, in the same way as Luxemburg, a member of the Germanic Confederation, was subject to the throne of Holland, or as Hanover, another member of that Confederation, owed allegiance to the English Crown. The deceased Sovereign, like so many of his predecessors, had been King *of* Denmark and Duke *in* Schleswig-Holstein; and, as Duke of Holstein and Lauenburg, he had been represented in the Germanic Diet. The population of Holstein was wholly German, that of Schleswig mainly so; and the former province, but it only, belonged to Germany by a political sort of union, while personally, so to speak, like Schleswig, appertaining to Denmark.

By the Treaty of London (1852) the succession to the throne of Denmark and the Duchies was, in default of heirs male of Frederick VII., assured to Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg, with the express stipulation that the existing rights and mutual obligations of the King of Denmark and the Germanic Confederation, in respect of Holstein and Lauenburg, should not thereby be altered. Stated briefly, the King of Denmark undertook not to incorporate Schleswig with the rest of his monarchy, nor do anything tending thereunto, while guaranteeing to both the Duchies the continuance of their large measure of traditional autonomy, with the common use and enjoyment of certain local institutions. In spite, however, of these solemn engagements, the 'Danification' of the Duchies was carried on in a more determined and masterful way than ever, and the Diet was frequently called upon to remonstrate with the Government of Copenhagen. Years passed, and, from merely omitting to fulfil their engagements, the Danes actually proceeded to violate them. Like the Austrians, they had been keenly watching the course of the parliamentary conflict in Prussia; and, like the Austrians with their Congress-of-Princes scheme of Federal reform, they saw that now was their opportunity, when Prussia's hands were bound, or seemed to be bound, by her internal troubles and her Polish difficulties. Now was the time, thought Frederick VII.; and on the 30th March 1863, he issued his famous Patent dissolving the traditional union between Schleswig and Holstein, and decreeing certain changes in their Constitution which were tantamount to the incorporation of the former province with the rest of his kingdom proper—an end which he had solemnly bound himself not to compass. Trammelled though he was with manifold cares, Bismarck at once protested against this flagrant breach of treaty obligations. The Diet likewise took the matter in hand, and, despite the urgent intervention of England, who was virtually told to mind her own

business, it decreed 'Federal execution' in Holstein-Lauenburg for the defence of German interests in those oppressed Duchies. Meanwhile the Danes remained defiant, and on the 13th November their Parliament passed a law incorporating Schleswig with Denmark. On the 15th Frederick VII. died, before he could sanction the new Constitution; but, yielding to the clamours of the Copenhagen mob, his successor, Christian IX., signed it before he had been two days on the throne.

King of Denmark, and Duke *in* Schleswig-Holstein—that was the title of Christian IX. But this double title, which had been conferred upon him by the new Pragmatic Sanction, did not long remain uncontested. Another Richmond at once appeared in the field in the person of Prince Frederick of Augustenburg, claiming to be legitimate heir to the Duchies, and denouncing the King of Denmark's dominion over them as a 'usurpation and unrighteous act of violence.' The proclamation of Frederick of Augustenburg was received in the Duchies themselves, and throughout all Germany, with a shout of applause; and, by a large majority, the Prussian Chamber at once passed a motion calling upon all German States to assist the Prince-Pretender in enforcing his claims.

'Wait a minute, gentlemen; not so fast, please,' said Bismarck, in substance, in the debate on the motion. 'You forget that we (Prussia and Austria) are parties to the Treaty of London, which recognises King Christian IX. as Duke of Schleswig-Holstein. What? Would you have us break a Treaty? Where is your public conscience? It is true that, by endorsing the wrongful act of his predecessor, he has already entitled us to withdraw from that Treaty; but surely it is for us to say when it shall suit our convenience to do so. By disavowing and undoing the acts of Frederick VII., the new King may still claim our adherence to the Treaty of London, and we must have patience a little to see if he does so; but it must surely be clear to you that, if we already quash that agreement, all the Danish obligations towards the Duchies, whereon it is based, will also fall to the ground, and thus we should have no longer any warrant for championing German rights in Schleswig, which is meanwhile, don't you see, the essential matter.'

Prussia and Austria had no difficulty in persuading the Diet to carry out its decree for federal execution in Holstein. About the middle of December—being a month after the death of the King of Denmark—a combined army, twelve thousand strong, of Saxons and Hanoverians entered that Duchy; and Frederick of Augustenburg, who was proclaimed Sovereign under its ægis, took up his seat in Kiel. ‘So far, so good, although not altogether well,’ thought Bismarck; ‘but Schleswig, after all, is our main object.’ Would the Diet, therefore, be good enough to request the King of Denmark to annul the unjust Constitution (incorporating Schleswig with his monarchy) which was the first act of his reign; and, in case of refusal, order the seizure of that other Duchy as a pledge for the fulfilment of Denmark’s solemn engagements towards the German Powers with respect to it? No, strange to say, the Diet would do nothing of the kind; and it was supported by the Pan-Germanists, who were horrified by the opening of this possible door of escape to Denmark, and by the prospect of her recovering her old sway over the Duchies. The Diet had ratified the agreements between Denmark on one side, and Prussia and Austria on the other, which, as far as concerned the two latter Powers, formed the basis of the Treaty of London; but now, when called upon to insist upon the performance of those agreements, it drew back. It was burdened with theoretical scruples; its jurisdiction only extended to Holstein; it could not interfere with Schleswig. ‘Very well then,’ said Bismarck, ‘if *you* won’t, *we* will, and *must*’; and he forthwith\* announced that Prussia and Austria would take it upon themselves to enforce the promise which had been primarily made to them.

‘Grant us twelve million thalers to carry out our policy,’ said Bismarck to the country. ‘Nay, by Heaven, not one single groschen will we give you,’ answered the furious deputies; ‘and furthermore, in consideration that this

policy of yours, among its other ruinous consequences, can only lead to the restoration of the Duchies to Denmark (*sic*), we shall employ all the legal means at our disposal to oppose and thwart it.' 'Very well then, gentlemen,' resolutely but cheerfully rejoined Bismarck (who smiled in his sleeve at the idea of his returning the Duchies to Denmark), '*Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo*'; 'if you will not give us the money we require in a constitutional way, we must simply take it where we can get it. . . . And let me tell you, gentlemen, and also the foreign countries you speak of, that if we find it necessary to wage war, we shall do so with or without your approval.'

On the 1st February, 1864, the Austro-Prussian army of occupation crossed the Eider, and within a week it had victoriously engaged the Danes at several places, driven them from the Danewerk, swept them northward as with a broom, and forced the bulk of them to take refuge behind the redoubts of Düppel, their last refuge and bulwark in Schleswig. This was swift and effective work, and what added to its merit was the fact that it was accomplished in spite of difficulties which, to a man of less force of will and keenness of insight than Bismarck, would have proved deterrent or insuperable. With the vast majority of his own countrymen he was as unpopular as Strafford before his impeachment. Not only had they refused him the extraordinary supplies demanded to bear him out in his Schleswig policy, but also again rejected the military estimates. The parliamentary conflict was still fiercely raging; the country was still without a budget; and even the King had been charged with disregarding the admonition which once made the great, but unscrupulous, Napoleon pause: '*Votre Majesté va fusiller la loi.*' And while the Chamber had vowed to do all in its power to 'oppose and thwart' Bismarck's policy, it was equally assailed by the Governments of the minor German States. He virtually stood alone, in all the solitude of misunderstood genius.

And, to the opposition which hampered him at home, there was added the intervention with which he was threatened from abroad.

Of this threatened intervention the chief deviser was England, and England now played a part which, in the words of one best able to judge (Sir Alexander Malet, English minister at Frankfort), 'lowered our national reputation and left a stigma of egotism on the nation.' In spite of the opportunities that had been afforded them in the previous year by the incidents of the Polish rising, her Majesty's advisers had not yet comprehended the character of the Prussian Minister of Foreign Affairs, or they never would have addressed to Bismarck so much mere 'waste paper.' It was natural enough for the English Government to fear that the dismemberment of the Danish monarchy might lead to an undue and dangerous predominance of Prussia on the Baltic, but it was surely incumbent upon it to inquire into the merits of the quarrel which threatened to end in the realisation of that fear. Unfortunately, there is nothing to show that it performed this duty with the requisite impartiality of mind ; and its obliquity of judgment was rendered still more crooked by the contagion of popular feeling. It was enough to arouse the sympathies of Englishmen to see a brave little people like the Danes heroically, but hopelessly, struggling against two huge bully Powers like Austria and Prussia ; and these sympathies were still further deepened by the fact of the nation having lately received into their midst—to be their future Queen—that 'sea-king's daughter from over the sea' whose winning graces were well calculated to excite the pity of all chivalrous hearts for her hard-pressed countrymen and kinsfolk.

Bismarck was already too well acquainted with the motives of the European Cabinets to pay serious heed to the fire of menace and remonstrance which continued to play upon him from London. No continental statesman had ever, in similar circumstances, dared to defy Britannia

as Herr von Bismarck now did. Her 'cajolery and menaces' he treated with equal disdain. Baulked in every one of her repeated efforts to deter the Austro-Prussian allies from crossing the Eider, England at last sought the co-operation of France, Russia, and Sweden, in order to produce 'sufficient moral effect' on Prussia, or, failing that, to give 'material assistance' to the Danes. But, alas! the affairs of Prussia were now in the hands of a man impervious to the operation of mere 'moral effect'; and he had already taken good care to make himself sure of his men, in expectation of such a contingency as the present. Russia, as we have seen, had been laid under a counter-obligation to Prussia by the services of the latter in the matter of the Polish insurrection; while not only had France been propitiated by a favourable commercial treaty, and indulged with delusive prospects of unmolested conquest—who can tell where?—but her Emperor also was as piqued at England's rejection, as he was flattered by Prussia's acceptance, of his idea of a Congress of Sovereigns for readjusting the affairs of Europe, to which he had issued invitations shortly before the death of the King of Denmark.

The war went on disastrously for the overmatched Danes, and every achievement of the allies was the signal for repeated acts of protest or proposal on the part of England. Now it was mediation, then a protocol, then a conference, and then an armistice; but Bismarck was ever ready with his answer to these devices. At length, when the allies had entered Jutland, the Danes declared themselves ready to negotiate on the basis of the agreements of 1851-52 (Treaty of London). 'Quite impossible,' replied Bismarck; 'too late now, these no longer exist; war cancels all treaties; the only thing we can agree to is a Conference without definite basis, and without an armistice.' But, meanwhile, the necessity for insisting on the latter condition was dispensed with by the crowning victory of the 18th April, when the Prussians captured the bravely-defended redoubts

of Düppel, and made themselves complete masters of the situation. Great was the enthusiasm in the land, and loud the cheers for 'King William, the Liberator of Schleswig,' as, with his 'blood-and-iron' Minister at his side, he reviewed the storming columns in the Sundewitt three days after their bloody victory.

Quickened in their action by the stimulus of accomplished facts, the representatives of the Powers who had signed the Treaty of London now again met in Conference in the same capital, to clip into trim and seemly shape with the scissors of diplomacy the cloth which had been slashed from the web of history by the sword of war; but, unfortunately, one of the first things they learned was that the ground, so to speak, had been cut away from beneath their very feet. On the 15th May, the moment of expediency for which he had been waiting having now come, Bismarck announced that Prussia no longer deemed herself bound by the Treaty of London. The hour of justification for this step, he argued, had arrived when the Danes broke the engagements on which the Treaty of London was based; and if he did not denounce it sooner, as he was entitled to do, this was merely out of consideration for the other non-Danish parties to it, and from a desire to give the Danes the usual days of grace. But, remaining stubborn in their injustice, they had appealed to arms, and war annulled all agreements.

Is it necessary to detail the proceedings of a Conference which ended in smoke; as how, indeed, could it, in the circumstances, have ended otherwise? Either driven mad by the gods who meant to destroy them, or deluded with hopes of succour from friends who could do nothing but leave them in the lurch, the Danes remained stone-deaf to the moderate proposals of the allies, despite the 'barking of all the dogs that could be let loose upon them at the Conference'; and thus, from 'complete independence,' Bismarck was forced to raise his demand to 'complete separation' of the Duchies. The Danes were obstinately



deaf, and Bismarck was inexorably determined. The Conference ended where it commenced, and the combatants again flew to arms.

The allies tightened their grasp on Jutland ; the Prussians, by another brilliant storming feat, captured the island of Alsen, on which the enemy had sought refuge after their expulsion from Düppel ; and now at last, confronted with such dire realities, the scales began to fall from the eyes of the brave but blinded Danes. The Cabinet at Copenhagen was changed, and King Christian imploringly appealed to the 'magnanimous goodwill and the lofty sense of justice' of the allied Sovereigns. On the 1st of August the exercise of these noble qualities was evinced in the Preliminaries of Peace, by virtue of which the King of Denmark unconditionally surrendered to the rulers of Prussia and Austria the Duchies of Schleswig, Holstein, and Lauenburg ; and, on the 30th of October following, there was signed, on this unaltered basis, the Treaty of Vienna.

By the chief clause in that Treaty the King of Denmark had bound himself to submit to the way in which their Majesties might think fit to dispose of these three Duchies. As far as Denmark, therefore, was concerned, the Schleswig-Holstein question was past and done with. But for the allies there yet remained the terribly difficult and dangerous problem—what to do with these Duchies, now that at last they had been wrested from their unjust step-mother of a 'Niobe Denmark.' Fasolt and Fafner, the two giants in the prologue to Wagner's great operatic trilogy, were friendly enough when building a sky-palace, or Walhalla, for the King of the Gods ; but when it came to the apportionment of the reward which Wuotan had promised them, they fell out, did these all too-grasping brothers ; and Fafner, slaying Fasolt, made off with the whole of their pay in the shape of the Nibelungen-Hoard. And was it thus to be with the fraternal conquerors of 'Schleswig-Holstein sea-surrounded' ?

While the London Conference was sitting, Bismarck had declared to a friend that 'annexation (of the Duchies) is *not* our foremost aim, though it certainly would be the pleasantest result.' But that result had been rendered all the more inevitable, first by the obstinacy of the Danes, and then by the unwisdom of the Prince of Augustenburg; and a variety of circumstances were gradually tending to make Bismarck exclaim (within himself), '*Beati possidentes!*'—'Blessed are they that are in possession, for they shall not be cast out!' Meanwhile the administration of all the three Duchies was placed in the hands of an Austro-Prussian Civil Commission, pending the settlement of their ultimate proprietorship. But the two commissioners-in-chief had been furnished with contrary instructions; and whatever the Prussian set about to do was sure to be thwarted by his Austrian colleague. The latter had received orders to support the pretensions of the Duke of Augustenburg; the former to frown upon them. The Austrians encouraged demonstrations in favour of the Pretender; and the Prussians retorted by arresting and expelling the agitators. The Austrians ostentatiously held aloof from the celebration of the anniversary of Düppel, but, on the other hand, drank toasts and made speeches on the birthday of the Duke of Augustenburg. The Prussian naval station on the Baltic was, by royal command, transferred from Danzig to Kiel, and the Imperial Government sent round to the latter harbour a couple of war-vessels by way of asserting its condominate rights. Prussia proposed the expulsion of the Pretender, the cause of so much mischief, and Austria not only answered with an emphatic 'No!' but asked that his claims should be recognised.

In making this demand, Austria was but acting for the population of the Duchies themselves, of which by far the greater portion desired to have the Prince of Augustenburg for their ruler. Even the King of Prussia himself was at first strongly in favour of the Pretender, but circumstances

tended to modify the King's belief. As for Bismarck himself, he adopted the convenient views of the crown-jurists that the Danish law of succession (of 1853), founded on the Treaty of London (in 1852), fully entitled King Christian to the sovereignty of the Duchies, which he had now formally surrendered to the allies; while the father of the Pretender had, in 1852, for a money consideration, formally waived all his rights of reversion to the conquered territory. At the same time, in consideration of the clearly expressed wish of the Schleswig-Holsteiners themselves, and for other prudent reasons, Bismarck was not unwilling to see the Prince-Pretender invested with the ducal sovereignty, but only under conditions which would equitably repay Prussia for the blood she had spilt in winning it for him, and which would guarantee to her and to Germany the existence of a strong bulwark of defence, instead of a weak and capricious principality on her northern frontier. The relations of the Giant Brothers in the Duchies were beginning to be most dangerously strained. More than once already they had all but clutched at their swords. 'It looks very shaky with peace,' wrote Bismarck from Gastein, in August 1865, whither he had gone with the King to 'patch up the rents in the fabric.' Had it not been for the King, who was equally cautious and conservative, his Minister would have already sought means to tear down the whole crumbling edifice.

At Karlsbad, whither Bismarck had accompanied the King, he told the Duc de Gramont that he considered 'war between the allies not only to be inevitable but necessary,' and that it was Prussia's mission to take the destinies of Germany into her own hands. From Karlsbad the King proceeded to Ratisbon, where was held a full Cabinet Council attended by the Prussian Ambassadors at Paris and Vienna; and two days afterwards, at Salzburg, Bismarck told the Bavarian minister, Von der Pfordten, that a deadly duel between the allies was impending, and that it behoved the minor States to be wise in time and take the proper

side. 'One single encounter,' he prophetically said, 'one decisive battle, and Prussia will have it in her power to dictate conditions.' From Salzburg he again proceeded with the King to Gastein to exert himself (unwillingly, we may suppose) with an Austrian plenipotentiary in 'patching up the rents in the building (of peace),' which he well knew was doomed to come tumbling down. But the negotiations first threatened to be futile, and ultimatums were already thought of.

Once more, however, the chariot of war was arrested in its onward career just as it was beginning to move, and the drag that was hung upon its wheels this time was the Convention of Gastein (14th August). It will sufficiently convey the contents of this Treaty—which was declared to be provisional in its nature—to say that it virtually centred the sovereignty of Schleswig in Prussia, and of Holstein in Austria; while, in consideration of the payment of two and a half millions of Danish dollars, the Emperor Francis Joseph ceded to King William all his rights of coproprietorship in the Duchy of Lauenburg. A few days after the signature of this Treaty, the sovereign parties to it, accompanied by their respective Premiers, met and embraced at Ischl; and within a month King William took formal possession of Lauenburg, appointing as its Minister Herr von Bismarck, whose brilliant services he now rewarded with the title of Count.

King William may have looked upon the Convention of Gastein as a happy remedy against rupture with a Sovereign with whom, in spite of all provocation, he was most unwilling to break. Bismarck certainly regarded it as another strong mesh in the toils with which he was seeking to encompass and destroy the implacable rival of his country. Military exigencies demanded some delay, and he had not yet secured himself either of France or of Italy. To all Europe the Treaty of Gastein was a mystery; to some Powers, such as France and England, it was an outrage

and a scandal. But a visit which Bismarck now paid to Napoleon at Biarritz had the effect of partially reconciling the Emperor to the policy of Prussia. 'Is he mad?' whispered the Emperor to Prosper Mérimée, on whose arm he leaned as he walked along the beach with his Prussian visitor. '*Il n'y a que M. de Bismarck qui soit un vrai grand homme,*' wrote Mérimée at this time to his *Inconnue*. 'He has quite won me; as, indeed, he also captivated Napoleon himself by his frankness and the charm of his manners.'

But while the stream of Bismarck's foreign policy was thus flowing steadily, if secretly, in the desired direction, the torrent of domestic conflict threatened to burst its banks and spread ruin around. Unpersuaded even by the eloquence of the cannon which had thundered at Düppel, commanding the submission of the Danes and the respect of Europe, the Liberals in Parliament still stubbornly clung to their tactics of 'impotent negation.' Such inflexible and ferocious adhesion to abstract dogmas of policy might well have been expected of a Papal Council, but seemed inexplicable in a body of men claiming to represent their country, and to have its interests only at heart. The Chamber was the constant scene of most unseemly brawls, and on one or two occasions even the heat of wordy strife had like to have led to blows. Dr. Virchow once roundly accused Bismarck of unverity. 'What do you think you can attain, gentlemen, with a tone like this?' asked Bismarck. 'Do you really wish us to settle our political quarrels in the manner of the Horatii and the Curiatii? If so,'—and, suiting the action to the word, home he went and sent a challenge to his slanderer. The learned professor refused to expose science to the risk of prematurely losing one of her high priests, but the challenge had the effect of making him and his partisans somewhat warier henceforth with the wagging of their tongues.

The first session of the Diet after the Danish war was

one long scene of quarrel, recrimination and combat. Again did the Chamber reject the new military law, which had already borne such enticing fruit ; it firmly refused to cover the expenses which had bound another laurel round the brow of Prussia, and enriched her with two fair provinces ; nor would it listen to the prayer of the Government for ten million thalers to build a fleet, now that at last the nation had acquired the splendid harbour of Kiel to shelter one. Parliament acknowledged the necessity of creating a navy, but it would not give a Bismarck Ministry money to make it with. To those who thus wanted protection but would not pay for it, Bismarck could only reply that 'existence on the basis of the Phæacians was doubtless more comfortable than that of the Spartans,' but that, as Düppel and Alsen had been conquered in despite of them, so he hoped Prussia would also yet get a fleet for all their 'impotent negation.'

About this time an incident occurred which showed Bismarck to what extent the bitter hatred and hostility, of which he had become the constant butt in the Chamber, had also possessed the heart of the nation. On the afternoon of the 7th May, 1866, he was returning to his residence in the Wilhelm Strasse from the Palace, where he had been to see the King. He had reached a point in the central avenue of the Linden nearly opposite the Russian embassy—a spot afterwards to derive additional notoriety from the crime of Hödel—when he was startled by two shots close behind him, and turning round he beheld a young man—not long apparently out of his teens—coolly aiming at him with a six-chambered revolver. To grasp the wrist of the assassin with one hand and his throat with the other was, with his intended victim, the work of a moment ; but the ruffian, wrestling desperately, managed to fire off three of his other bullets—two of which actually grazed the Minister's breast and shoulder. Quickly recovering his presence of mind, and collecting his vast strength, he closed with his

would-be murderer and held him fast as in a vice. It chanced that at this moment a company of the Guards was marching down the Linden; and, handing over the assassin to the care of the soldiers, who led him off to gaol, Bismarck continued his way home. He afterwards related that the incident had been complicated by the passers-by at first taking him for the murderer, as, indeed, it was natural for them, in the confusion of the moment, to infer that the criminal was the big, aggressive-looking man with a smoking revolver in his hand—for he had wrenched it from his assailant—and not the smooth-faced youth struggling in his iron grasp. Arrived home, Bismarck sat down and wrote a brief account of the incident to the King, and then, entering the drawing-room, greeted the several guests assembled for dinner as if nothing had happened. ‘I have been shot at, my child,’ he at last whispered to his wife; ‘but never mind, there is no harm done. Let us now go in to dinner.’ The Minister had been saved only by a miracle, as the family doctor declared, and great was the joy of his friends. Presently the King came in to offer his congratulations, and his example was soon followed by all the great ones of the capital. A serenading multitude in the street, and a speech of thanks from Bismarck’s balcony closed the exciting day—a day, alas! that only opened the era of attempts at political murder in Berlin.

The inaugurator of this era, who committed suicide the same night in his cell, proved to be a young man called Ferdinand Cohen—a stepson of Karl Blind, a democratic fugitive from Baden living in London, whose name he had likewise adopted. A youth of good education, he had in South Germany studied agriculture both in theory and practice, but the devotion to this sober pursuit had not prevented his mind from becoming a seed-field for those delirious, yet consistent, idealisms with which the heads of German students are so often dangerously ablaze. He had been an eager listener to the rant of republicans and the

ravings of the doctrinaires; and, like another Balthazar Gérard, he had journeyed to Berlin with the set resolve to rid the nation of a man who was universally denounced as the oppressor of Prussian liberties, and the disturber of German peace.

No sooner had Bismarck signed the document, which was designed to 'patch up rents in the edifice of peace,' than he began to sneer at it. 'Do you mean to break the Convention of Gastein?' bluntly at last demanded Count Karolyi of the Prussian Minister-President. 'No,' replied the latter, with equal directness; 'but even if I did, do you suppose I should' (be such a fool as to) 'tell you?' This was in March (1866), barely six months after the conclusion of the agreement which provisionally assigned Holstein to Austria, and Schleswig to Prussia (pending the final determination of their fate), and, in the interval, much had occurred to show the folly and the danger of the arrangement. At last the cup of Prussian patience became full to overflowing when the Austrian Government specially sanctioned, at Altona, the holding of a mass meeting which demanded the convocation of the estates and cheered 'the lawful and beloved Prince Frederick.' Within a week after this event Bismarck had sent to Vienna two long and emphatic despatches in which he specified his grievances; accused Austria of encouraging in the Duchies that 'spirit of revolution' which, as a common danger, she had agreed with Prussia to combat; charged her with pursuing 'an aggressive policy in Holstein,' and declared it to be 'an imperative necessity that clearness should be brought into their mutual relations.' To these remonstrances Count Mensdorff returned so evasive and ungracious a reply, that soon afterwards there was held at Berlin a Cabinet Council which the governor of Schleswig (Manteuffel), the chief of the General Staff (Moltke), and the Prussian Ambassador in Paris (Count Goltz) were commanded to attend.



Meanwhile, Bismarck informed Count Karolyi that, 'convinced of the impossibility of any longer acting with Austria, Prussia resumed her liberty of action and would only consult her own interests.' These interests demanded that her hold over the Duchies should not be loosened by her ally and rival, and, moreover, it concerned her honour not to recede from the path on which she had already so far advanced. The sovereignty of the Duchies was still, it is true, conjointly vested in the two Powers; but Austria had turned a deaf ear to the overtures of Prussia for acquiring Schleswig-Holstein as she had already acquired Lauenburg, or by some other equitable arrangement; there was no possible chance of their agreeing as to the ultimate disposal of the conquered provinces; and their conjoint dominion had already become intolerable both to the rulers and the ruled. There had thus arisen a problem which clearly could only be solved by the sword.

The Cabinet meeting at Berlin was speedily answered by a 'Marshal's Council' in Vienna, at which General Benedek assisted; and soon thereafter masses of troops began to be secretly pushed up from Hungary, and other outlying parts of the Empire, toward Bohemia and Moravia. 'What is the meaning of all these warlike preparations on our frontier?' demanded Berlin. 'Pooh,' replied Vienna, 'precautions merely against the repetition of these troublesome anti-Jewish riots in that quarter.' But Berlin knew better, and soon, too, throughout all Prussia nought was heard but the ominous sound of the 'armourers accomplishing' the knights, and of the 'clink of hammers closing rivets up.' The development of the great German drama had now reached that point where the final sword-combat between the two leading characters in an historical tragedy is preceded by 'alarms and excursions,' and by mutual reproaches deepening into the bitter recriminations of deadly hate. It was no wonder that Austria began to arm to the teeth; and Bismarck rejoiced to think that the

semblance of additional righteousness would be lent his cause by the fact of Austria having been thus induced to commit the grave mistake of first buckling on her armour. While diplomatic notes were passing between Vienna and Berlin, Austrian troops had been pouring up towards the Prussian frontier ; till at last, as a counter-precaution, King William was prevailed upon to issue orders for the partial mobilisation of his army in the threatened quarter.

Italy arming too? Yes, in hot and secret haste, and Austria could not possibly be blind to the reason why. With the haughty contempt of the despot who overrates his power, she had rejected the overtures of the Cabinet of Florence for the cession of Venetia, and thus had driven Italy into the extended arms of Prussia. Between the dynasties of these two States, both engaged in the work of national unification, there could not but exist a deep natural sympathy ; and this feeling was intensified by common hatred of the Power which stood between them and their aims. Not only to secure the neutrality of Prussia's non-German neighbours, but also to enlist Italy on her side in the coming struggle, had been Bismarck's great object ; and he achieved it with consummate skill. At the beginning of April, General Govone arrived in Berlin from Florence with full powers to come to terms with Prussia, and on the 8th of that month he signed with Bismarck a secret Treaty of Offensive and Defensive Alliance, by which Italy undertook to draw the sword for Prussia should she have to go to war with Austria within three months ; while each agreed neither to conclude peace nor an armistice without the assent of the other, and it was well understood what the territorial conditions of peace would have to be.

Austria suspected the existence of this secret Treaty ; France knew of it. France ! How can we describe the dark, shifting, and tortuous policy pursued by the Emperor Napoleon during all this momentous time ? While

negotiating separately and secretly with the two sworn enemies, wholly with an eye to his own advantage, he affected to prove his own disinterestedness by suggesting the submission of their quarrel to a European Congress. Bismarck did not believe that any congress or convention whatever could supply the remedy of which his suffering country stood so much in need, but, yielding to the inclination of the King, who deemed that his pride would allow him to concede to Europe what his honour forbade him to grant to Austria alone, he accepted the proposal of Napoleon. Austria, however, as he hoped and knew she would, rejected it; and when, in presence of M. Benedetti, the despatch from Paris announcing the failure of the Congress was brought to him, Bismarck joyfully exclaimed: '*Vive le Roi!*'

'Well then,' said Bismarck, to General Govone, 'which of us is now going to apply fire to the powder, Prussia or Italy?' And to Count Barral, the Italian Ambassador: 'You would do us excellent service by attacking first.' Why? Because King William still clung to hopes of peace, and could not be prevailed upon by his eager Minister to draw the sword; and his warlike Minister, whose only thought now was how to devise a *casus belli*, calculated that, if Italy could only be induced to precipitate the conflict, the scruples of the King would be finally overcome. 'If you only knew,' said Bismarck to an opponent shortly before the war, 'what a frightful struggle it has caused me to persuade his Majesty to fight, you would also comprehend that I am obeying the iron law of necessity.'

Personally attached to the Emperor Francis Joseph, the King could not reconcile himself to the idea of breaking with the dynastic traditions of the past; and even when all hope of peace had vanished, he entered into secret negotiations with his brother-Sovereign without the knowledge of his own Minister-President. Furthermore, the

King had 'religious, nay, even superstitious scruples against incurring the responsibility for a European war'; and these scruples were doubtless deepened by the protests and peace-addresses which came pouring in from all parts of the country—from public meetings, and corporations, and chambers of commerce—invoking 'a curse on the head of the authors' of the impending war. This popular agitation against Bismarck's policy had, as we have seen, produced a fanatic who tried to take his life; but the fact of this attempt operated very differently on the mind of its object, and on that of his royal master. In addition to all this, the King's ear was accessible to the tales of Court intrigue, which never fails to misrepresent the aims and asperse the character of a royal favourite; but Bismarck gave a signal proof of his fixity of purpose and his strength of will in overcoming, if not, perhaps, removing all these scruples of his master against recourse to the terrible remedy of war.

On the 1st of June, Austria, whose patience had now been skilfully wearied out, declared that, being unable to agree with Prussia as to the disposal of the Duchies, she now submitted the question to the decision of the Diet; and at the same time she issued orders for convoking the estates of Holstein, so that the will of the province as to its own fate might also be consulted. 'What! Interfere with our condominium rights in that way!' exclaimed Prussia in overflowing wrath. 'By appealing to the Diet you have cast aside the Convention of Gastein and returned to the Treaty of Vienna, and therefore deprived yourself of the exclusive right to convoke the estates of Holstein, where *we* have interests as well as *you*. Therefore you, General Manteuffel, march some of your troops at once into Holstein, for the protection of our common sovereign rights which Austria has so defiantly outraged.' Into Holstein accordingly from Schleswig promptly marched grim Manteuffel and his helmeted men, before whom Marshal Gablenz and his kepied Austrians, fearing to risk

an unequal conflict, at first withdrew from Kiel to Altona, and then bundled out of the Duchy as nimbly as ever they could—away over the Elbe, away to Hanover, over the hills and far away. On the approach of the Prussians, too, the Augustenburg Pretender, snatching up a few necessaries, vanished from Kiel like a streak of lightning ; and, on the 12th of June, the soldiers of King William found themselves in sole and actual possession of 'Schleswig-Holstein sea-surrounded.'

Two days previously Bismarck re-intimated to the Diet his readiness to accept its treatment of the Schleswig-Holstein question on condition of its previously accepting his proposal of Federal reform, which comprised the exclusion of Austria from the new Confederation, and a national Parliament that 'would act as a counterpoise to dynastic, and therefore selfish, interests in adjudicating on the fate of the Duchies.' To this Austria promptly replied by protesting to the Diet against the masterful policy of 'self-help' pursued by Prussia in Holstein, and moved for the immediate mobilisation of all the Federal army against the 'wanton breaker' of the national peace. On the 14th June this motion was carried by nine to six votes. Prussia at once declared her withdrawal from a Confederation which had so flagrantly exceeded its powers. Diplomatic intercourse with Vienna and Berlin was at once broken off ; the inevitable hour for which Bismarck had yearned so long had now at last struck ; and Germany found itself on the eve of a war of which the prospect filled with gloom and apprehension all men save him who, like another Columbus, standing ever steadfast and hopeful at the helm of the ship of State amid a mutinous and despairing crew, was guiding it slowly but surely to the shores of a new political world.

What days and nights these were at Berlin, with their physical toil and mental strain, their momentous councils, their fateful decisions, their flashing of telegrams fraught

with tremendous issues! Calmly resolute and prompt was Bismarck amid the wild excitement which now prevailed throughout the nation; and one of the first things he did was to send ultimatums to the Sovereigns of Hanover, Saxony, and Hesse-Cassel—ultimatums which offered them the choice of siding with Prussia, or of having to suffer for it. All three returned equivocal answers tantamount to 'No!'—and in less than two days their capitals were in the grip of Prussian troops, the two Kings fugitives from their dominions, and the Elector on his way to Stettin as a State-prisoner! Never had there been such prompt and splendid action since Frederick the Great, *suspecting* the designs of the Saxons, marched on Dresden and *seized* the proofs of their conspiracy with his foes; or since Nelson sailed to Copenhagen and disabled the Danish fleet from serving the Corsican robber against the Mistress of the Seas. An ardent protest of innocence and manifesto from the Emperor Francis Joseph, a stirring 'appeal to my people' and to the 'God of battles' from King William, with a simultaneous declaration of war against Austria by Italy—and the diplomatic act of the great 'German drama,' in which Bismarck figured as the chief performer, was now succeeded by that phase of the quarrel in which he retired to the back of the stage to watch, with breathless Europe, the further development of the tragedy by the incidents of locked and mortal strife.

It is no part of our duty to detail the fascinating game of war which now proved that Prussia was served by the first strategist as well as by the first diplomatist in Europe. The confidence with which Bismarck had spoken and acted was to a great extent the result of his complete trust in the capability of the Prussian army, and of the soldier who was its mind and brain, to make good his actions and his words; and now he drew back and watched while Hellmuth von Moltke set all the wondrous machinery in harmonious motion by a gentle pressure of his finger, and while he

pored over his map in the office of the Grand General Staff at Berlin, as at a pensive game of chess, and moved his military pawns by touch of electric wire. Never before had war been waged in this way; never had any method of waging war been more swiftly, more surprisingly successful.

Bismarck himself was anxious to witness the decisive move in the terrible game, and on the 30th June, with the King and Counts Roon and Moltke, he started for the seat of war from Berlin, which was already half-delirious with the foretaste of victory. Great was the enthusiasm with which King William and his mighty men of valour—his Bismarck, his Moltke, and his Roon—were received by his devoted troops. On the afternoon of the 2d, after visiting the hospitals with Bismarck, the King held a council of war, at which it was decided to let the troops rest on the morrow and collect themselves for a crushing blow. But meanwhile a daring reconnaissance had revealed the fact that the enemy, in strong force, were preparing to attack; and at midnight the King again took council of his paladins, who urged him to wait not, neither rest, but strike at the dawn of day.

The battle began at eight o'clock, and at that hour the King, with Bismarck and his staff, appeared among his troops, and was received with ringing, thrilling, never-ending cheers. For hours the rain fell and the cannon roared, the country for miles across was enveloped in the sulphurous and suffocating pall of volumed battle-smoke, and the needle-gun wrought fearful havoc among the devoted batfalions of Austria; but still they kept their ground, and put the stubborn valour and discipline of their foes to the severest test. The scales of battle hung pretty evenly, albeit Herwarth von Bittenfeld had already begun to hammer with might and main on the Austrian left. But the Austrian right, the right—that was where the Prussians looked for the coming of the Crown Prince as anxiously, as yearningly as Wellington had longed for the

arrival of Blücher from the same direction. 'Would to God the Crown Prince or darkness would come!' Moltke was almost beginning to think, when suddenly Bismarck lowered his glass and drew the attention of his neighbours to certain lines in the far distance. All telescopes were pointed thither, but the lines were pronounced to be furrows. 'These are not furrows,' said Bismarck, after another scrutinising look; 'the spaces are not equal; they are advancing lines.' And so they were; and soon thereafter the cannon-thunder of 'Unser Fritz,' with the irresistible rush of the Guards up the heights of Chlum and Rosberitz, brought relief and joy to the minds of all. Violently assailed on both flanks and fiercely pressed in the centre, the Austrians now began to slacken their fire, to waver, to give way, to retreat; and soon their flight degenerated into headlong rout. Perceiving his opportunity, the King led forward in person the whole cavalry reserve of the First Army, which charged and 'completely overthrew' a similar force of the foe, and then the bloody and momentous battle was won.

After the battle, which lasted eight hours, the King with his staff rode round the widely scattered positions of his troops, and Bismarck witnessed the touching incidents which everywhere marked his progress; how battalion after battalion—some of them mere shadows of their former selves—bursts into frenzied cheering and rushed forward—officers and men—to kiss the hand, the boot, the stirrup, of their beloved leader; and how, late in the evening, the drama of the day was closed by the affecting meeting of the aged King and his heroic son—a meeting which has become as historical as that of Blücher and Wellington. But Bismarck confessed that his exultation at the stupendous victory was utterly marred by the horrible spectacle of the dead, the dying, and the wounded—about 32,000 in number—who heaped the bloody plain.

It was only next day that the results of the battle of



Königgrätz, or Sadowa, as the Austrians more properly call it, became fully apparent ; a battle which, in point of the numbers—430,000 men—who took part in it, ranked after the *Völkerschlacht* of Leipzig. By superior arms, superior numbers, superior discipline, and superior strategy, Prussia, at the cost of 10,000 of her sons, had won a crowning victory over her rival, who lost 40,000 men (including 18,000 prisoners), 11 standards, and 174 guns. ‘I have lost all,’ exclaimed Benedek, ‘except, alas, my life.’ It was little wonder that, on the morrow of Königgrätz, the *Moniteur* announced to the French nation that ‘an important event has happened.’ ‘One single encounter,’ Bismarck had said, ‘one decisive battle, and Prussia will have it in her power to dictate conditions.’

That battle had now been fought and won ; and on the evening of the next day King William received a telegram from Napoleon who, while announcing that Francis Joseph had ceded to him Venetia (in trust for Italy), offered his services as mediator for a truce and a peace. Not by the Italians themselves—for their army had been soundly thrashed by the Austrians on the plains of Verona—but by the Prussians in Bohemia, had Venetia been wrested from the grasp of Austria ; and on the morrow of Königgrätz, Francis Joseph, while ceding the province to Napoleon, begged the friendly intervention of his brother-Emperor to prevent further bloodshed. Bismarck was equal to the occasion. ‘Certainly,’ replied King William to Napoleon’s telegram, ‘we are prepared to accept your mediation, but of a truce we can only talk on getting from Austria the pledge of an acceptable peace.’ In the meantime the military preparations were pushed forward with the utmost energy. Prague was occupied, various minor engagements were fought with the retreating Austrians, till at last the Prussian outposts caught sight of the towers of Vienna.

Meanwhile M. le Comte Benedetti, French Ambassador at Berlin, made his appearance at the Prussian head-

quarters, of purpose to stay the conquerors in their career ; but he was plainly told, as Marshal Gahlenz had twice already been told, that an armistice could not be concluded without the assent of Italy, and without a guarantee of peace. Away, therefore, he sped to Vienna with the latest proposal of his master—acting the part of a shuttle in the motley web of diplomacy now being woven—and back he came post-haste to the camp-court of King William, which, ever nearing Vienna, was now established in the romantic old castle of Nicolsburg, where Napoleon I. had also resided after the battle of Austerlitz. Back came breathless M. Benedetti with the triumphant news that, with infinite pains, he had prevailed on Francis Joseph to accept the suggestions of Napoleon as the basis of negotiations. And was not this first success of the Napoleonic mediation calculated to fill the mind of Bismarck with moderation and gratitude? On the contrary, artless M. Benedetti was shocked to find that the Prussian Minister-President only hem'd and hah'd, and wondered why the French Emperor could have shown such a stingy spirit in seeking to curtail a conqueror of his natural rights ; for had not King William vowed that, 'after making such sacrifices as he had done, he would rather abdicate than return home without a considerable addition of territory'?

Bismarck was perfectly frank with his astute French friend. While declaring that the King was willing to accept the Napoleonic proposal as the basis of a five days' truce, he avowed that the main condition of a definitive peace could only be the cession to Prussia of Hanover, Saxony, and Hesse, which had hitherto, like wedges driven into the stem of an oak, impeded her natural growth and split her into sprawling, disconnected fragments. These States had been fairly warned before the outbreak of hostilities, but had nevertheless taken up arms against Prussia ; and now the necessities of her own position, no less than the national

needs of Germany, compelled her to assert the priority of her rights as a conqueror over the pleadings of sentimental humanitarians for the piteous fate of the fallen, and for the principle of legitimate and old-established monarchy.

M. Benedetti affected to believe that, in making such 'monstrous demands,' Bismarck was not in earnest, and reminded him that Europe was no longer living in the time of Frederick the Great, who (like Rob Roy) kept whatever he took. Bismarck returned that no State would seriously oppose the designs of Prussia. 'What about England, and her old dynastic ties with Hanover?' asked M. Benedetti. Bismarck, who remembered what England had done for Denmark, only shrugged his shoulders. 'And Russia?' inquired the French Ambassador. Bismarck knew that General Manteuffel was about to proceed to St. Petersburg with assurances which would defeat all opposition in that quarter. 'And France?' continued M. Benedetti, with the self-satisfied look of a man who thinks he has at last delivered a poser. 'Well, what of France?' rejoined Bismarck. 'The Emperor will surely never dispute our right to annex the countries above mentioned.' 'Well, perhaps not,' responded Monsieur Benedetti with a whisper, 'on condition of your giving us due compensation; on condition of your giving us Mayence, and restoring us the Rhine-frontier of 1814.'

Within a week after this interview, Bismarck, who always had a strong liking for the logic of accomplished facts, sent for the French Ambassador and told him, to his no small consternation, that by the Preliminaries of Peace of Nicolsburg (26th July) which had just been signed, Austria, among other things, agreed to a Prussian annexation of Schleswig-Holstein, Hanover, Hesse-Cassel, and Nassau, and the Free City of Frankfort. But what had Monsieur Benedetti been about, that all this was done without his direct cognisance and approval? Had, then, the repre-

sentative of the *grande nation* not been admitted to the peace conferences? No, indeed; he had to remain out in the cold, and pick up such scanty crumbs of information as were freely flung him, or as he could gather from beneath the sumptuous table of babbling Rumour, while Bismarck sat closeted with Count Karolyi and Baron Brenner, and re-fashioned the map of Germany according to his iron will and pleasure.

And yet not wholly so, for he was finally moved from his firm resolve to annex the Kingdom of Saxony, whose stubborn and intriguing opposition (under its Prime Minister, Beust) to his reform schemes had been one of the main causes of the war. But on the subject of Saxony, which had bled so freely for him on the field of Sadowa, Francis Joseph was, or pretended to be, quite inexorable; and his protestations were supported by the Emperor of the French, who had been personally implored by Beust to stand up for the King of Saxony in his hour of stress, as the King of Saxony, alone of all the German Princes, had stood by the Great Napoleon after his collapse at Leipzig—a prayer with which Napoleon the Little was all the more willing to comply, as, under the mask of magnanimity, he would thus be able to thwart the ambitious schemes of successful Prussia. As a matter of fact, Saxony was less essential to the territorial perfection of Prussia than Hanover and Hesse; and Bismarck wisely deemed it not worth while to provoke a renewal of the conflict for the sake of this kingdom, provided its accession to the new Confederation of the North were secured. Rather, however, than yield on the latter point, he threatened to break off the peace negotiations; and thus a compromise was effected which saved the sovereign integrity of Saxony, but yet defeated her desire of throwing in her fate with the States of the South under—in all probability—a French protectorate.

But, without Saxony, Prussia had every reason to be

satisfied with the other territories she had acquired—territories which added four and a half millions to her population, and increased her area by about a fourth of its previous extent. There is, indeed, reason to believe that King William was also bent on annexing part of Bohemia, and that he was only turned from his determination by the urgent representations of Bismarck, who, true to his ‘ungrateful task of pouring water into the foaming wine,’ rightly argued that such an act would leave a thorn in the heart of the Austrians that must needs one day blossom out into a luxuriant plant of revenge. Well appreciating the wisdom of treating vanquished Austria with moderation, and even magnanimity, Bismarck was content with her entire exclusion from the German family of States, being minded to keep open the door of future reconciliation by exacting no greater material indemnity for war-expenses than payment of forty million thalers. In spite of the fact, too, that all the South German States, with the exception of Baden, invoked the intervention of Napoleon in favour of lighter conditions of peace, they had every reason to be satisfied with the penalties imposed upon them. The peace preliminaries had secured to them—mainly at the instance of Napoleon—‘international and independent existence’; but how had Bismarck been induced to let them enter upon this advantageous kind of national life on such easy terms? A dramatic incident will soon explain.

Bismarck had left Berlin on the 30th of June, and on the 4th of August he returned with the King after an absence of little more than a month, with the draft of the Treaty of Prague in his pocket. Sitting in his cabinet two days after his return home, pondering proudly on the undreamt-of issue of the campaign and the jubilant acclamations which had greeted his return, he is aroused from his reverie by a knock at the door, and enter the Genius of Compensation in the shape of bland Monsieur Benedetti with the draft of a treaty in his hand.

'*Ah, bon jour, votre Excellence* ; how can I serve you ?'

'Well, to be brief, by restoring to France her Rhine frontier of 1814.'

'Your Excellency must be mad !'

'No, indeed ; my pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time, and makes as healthful music. The dynasty of my master were in danger, if public opinion in France is not appeased by some such concession from Germany.'

'Tell your Imperial master that a war (against us) in certain eventualities would be a war with revolutionary means, and that, amid revolutionary dangers, the German dynasty would be sure to fare much better than that of the Emperor Napoleon.'

'No prevarication—Mayence, or an immediate declaration of war.'

'Very well, then, let there be war,' said Bismarck, who knew that the Southern States had already agreed to sign secret Treaties conferring the command of their several armies on the King of Prussia, in the event of a national struggle. And *this*, then, was the consideration which had induced Bismarck to let off the States of the South on such easy terms. At Nicolsburg, he had put off French claims of compensation until after the conclusion of peace with Austria, and now he had devised means of defying them altogether. Now it was that Monsieur Benedetti bitterly experienced how bootless it is to shut the stable-door after the steed is stolen. He and his master had been completely duped.

Meanwhile Prussia proceeded with all energy to set her newly acquired house in order, and heeded not the midnight thief who prowled around it, seeking means of burglarious entry but finding none. From the hardships of the tented field and the labours of treaty-making, Bismarck now again passed to the arena of parliamentary fight, or rather of parliamentary victory. For the battle of Königgrätz, in addition to ending the long-standing quarrel

between Prussia and Austria, had also closed the bitter conflict which had for the last four years divided the King of Prussia from his people. The elections had been held—not, perhaps, without design—in the earlier stage of the Bohemian campaign, and, under the influence of the telegrams announcing the victorious progress of the national arms, the country returned a Chamber in which the moderate Liberal element predominated over the Progressists, or party of pure negation. On the day after his return to the capital, the new Diet was ceremoniously opened by the King, who begged to be now formally acquitted of having ruled so long without a budget. Eager to seize the hand of peace thus extended to it, yet covering its eagerness with a decent veil of professorial doctrine, the grateful Chamber not only passed a Bill of Indemnity on all irregular acts of the Government during the Conflict-Time, but also voted a credit of sixty million thalers (the war had cost eighty-eight) to defend, if need be, what had already been won.

For the rest, the most important work of the session was the passing of a law annexing Hanover, Electoral Hesse, Nassau, and the city of Frankfort; and on the day of its promulgation—20th September—representative bodies of the victorious Prussian army made their triumphal entry into Berlin. The King, who headed his home-returning heroes, was preceded by his three mightiest men of valour—Moltke, Roon, and Bismarck—the last now raised to the rank of a Major-General; and as the brilliant cavalcade proceeded down the Linden through a flower-strewn lane of more than two hundred captured Austrian guns, and past the spot where, but a few weeks before, an attempt had been made to take his life, the soldier-statesman, with the pale and overworked but high and haughty look, most conspicuous on his charger amid his companion-conquerors, must have been made to ponder sadly, yet proudly, on his employment as the instrument of his country's fate—made

to do so by the showers of laurel-wreaths, the sky-cleaving cheers, the clangorous acclaim of bells, and the saluting thunder of cannon, all blended into the frenzied pean of a victorious people.

## CHAPTER V

### THE NORTH GERMAN CONFEDERATION

ON 24th February, 1867, the first North German Parliament was ceremoniously opened in the throne-room of the royal palace. About three hundred deputies—chosen for three years—had been returned to this Constituent Assembly from the various allied States, by universal suffrage—a principle which had figured in the Frankfort Constitution (of 1848), as well as in the counter-schemes of Federal reform wherewith Bismarck had met the plans of Austria in 1863, and than which, with all its defects, he himself avowed he knew no better electoral law. Representatives of the allied Governments had meanwhile drawn up a Federal Charter, which had been framed, Bismarck declared, not with the view of attaining a theoretical ideal, but with the simple aim of meeting the present practical wants of the nation.

According to this Constitution, the twenty-two States north of the Main formed themselves into a 'perpetual league for the protection of the Union and its institutions, as well as for promoting the welfare of the German people.' Legislative power was to be vested in two bodies—the Reichstag, representing the people, and the Bundesrath, composed of delegates from the allied Governments—the perpetual presidency of the latter body being vested in the King of Prussia. So far, this was a Legislature of the bicameral kind; but the Bundesrath, or Federal Council, also comprised the functions of what, in England, would



be those of the House of Lords and of the Crown ; and in its name all executive power was vested in the King of Prussia, who, acting under its authority, was to have the supreme command of the army, declare war and conclude peace, appoint ambassadors, and conduct negotiations with foreign Powers. The cost of administration was to be contributed by the various States in proportion to their population, on whom was likewise placed the additional burden of universal liability to military service—all the Federal forces being reorganised on the Prussian model, and the strength of the standing army (on a peace footing) fixed at one per cent. of all the inhabitants. While foreign affairs, and all other matters of common interest, naturally fell within the exclusive competency of the new Federal Diet and Government, full legislative and administrative liberty was left to the individual States—as in the North American Union. The passing of a law requiring a majority in both bodies, it followed that considerable power, though chiefly of a negative and consultative kind, had thus been accorded to the German people as the result and reward of their services and sacrifices in the national cause ; but the balance of legislative authority still lay with the Federal Council, and more than a third of the authority of this body itself was in the hands of the King of Prussia.

Such were the main general features of the Federal Constitution, of which the discussion formed the sole task of the first North German Parliament. The party complexion of this body was very different from that of the Prussian Chamber which had waged four long years of bitter conflict with the Crown. The members of the Federal Assembly, it is true, were divided into no fewer than ten various fractions, each hugging its own particular dogma with the well-known preference of a mother for a frail and deformed child ; and thus it might have gone hard with the Government but for the fact that the balance of

parliamentary power was now in the hands of the National Liberals, a party to which the battle of Königgrätz had given birth. The Progressists were not averse from seeing Germany become united, but they held that the easiest way of doing this was first to make her free; while the National Liberals deemed it safer and wiser to subordinate the development of her internal institutions to the accomplishment of her national aims.

To the National Liberals it was mainly due that the Federal Charter was accepted by the Constituent Reichstag. But it was not accepted without some material modifications, and a dangerous amount of that academic wrangling so dear to the Teutonic mind. 'Show me two Germans,' said the wise man, 'and I will find you two opinions.' The protests of the Poles and the Danes against amalgamation in a nation not their own were, of course, soon disposed of; but some other points were debated with an obstinacy which made Bismarck feel, he said, like Harry Hotspur, when, 'breathless and faint' after the battle, he was 'pestered with a popinjay' of a hair-splitting and circumstantial lord. To him it was incomprehensible that the parliamentary doctrinaires should raise such a dust about unessential matters, under the blinding clouds of which the nation might again lose its way and miss its goal. He had exhorted the Assembly to do its work quickly. 'Only let us lift Germany into the saddle, so to speak,' he said, 'and she will ride of herself.'

The provisional Treaty of Federal Alliance had only been concluded till August 1867; time was flying, and what was to happen if, before then, the Constitution were not approved by the Reichstag and sanctioned by each of the local Diets? Besides, a dark cloud was beginning to loom up on Germany's western frontier, threatening to burst in a deluge and disperse the flock before the national shepherd could bring it under fold. It was no time to quarrel about constitutional trifles when the Gaul, in the garb of a beggar,

but with the threatening eye of a robber, was beating at the gates. 'Napoleon, unearthing his tomahawk, had forced the contending parties to renounce their favourite crotchets, relax the fists already doubled, and shake hands with open palm.' On the 17th April the Constitution of the North German Confederation was carried, one may almost say, rushed through, by a large majority. Germany had at last been 'lifted into the saddle,' and Bismarck was appointed her riding-master, or Chancellor of the Confederation. 'The time has now come,' said King William, in closing the Constituent Reichstag, 'when our German Fatherland is able to stand up for its peace, its rights, and its dignity with its united strength.' This hint, or threat, was addressed to France; but what had France done to deserve it?

When deep in its debates about the Constitution, the attention of the Reichstag was suddenly occupied with a question which showed the nation that it was by no means yet at liberty to settle down to the exclusive task of setting its house in order. How to secure for France advantages corresponding to the territorial gains of Prussia continued to be Napoleon's all-absorbing thought. We saw how his demand for Mayence and the Rhine frontier of 1814 was indignantly refused by Bismarck after Königgrätz, but the Emperor soon returned to the attack. Within a fortnight of M. Benedetti's trip to Paris with the last emphatic word of the Prussian Premier as to the Rhine, he was back in Berlin with fresh proposals of compensation to France in the direction of Belgium. It was natural enough of Bismarck, thought Napoleon, to decline parting with any of his native ground, but surely he would never object to the gratification of France's legitimate ambition at the expense of a foreigner. However niggardly with his own, there was at least no reason why he should not be generous with the goods of others. So argued the French Emperor. Of that there is authentic evidence, and this consists of a Draft

Treaty, in the handwriting of the French Ambassador, which openly expressed the desire of Napoleon to possess himself both of Belgium and of Luxemburg.

Great was the sensation when, on the 25th July 1870, a few days after the declaration of war with France, this Predatory Treaty was revealed to an indignant Europe through the columns of *The Times*. Bismarck asserted that this shameful Draft Treaty was communicated to him in 1867, *after* a Conference of the Powers at London had settled the Luxemburg question on the basis of international law. M. Benedetti, on the other hand, maintained that the instrument belonged to the autumn of 1866. But, after all, the date is of less importance than the fact; and the fact is certain. It was pretended by M. Benedetti that this treaty was the suggestion of Bismarck, who, he said, offered Belgium and Luxemburg to France in return for the latter's aid in 'crowning his work, and extending the domination of Prussia from the Baltic to the Alps.' But, even if Bismarck had made such a proposal, it could only have been with the view of fooling his antagonist, knowing as *he* did, but as M. Benedetti as yet *did not*, that his work had already been virtually crowned by the secret military treaties with the Southern States.

'Bismarck was the author, though I was the writer,' contended M. Benedetti, with a bitter regret that he should ever have been so foolish as to fall into the trap prepared for him. In truth, the astute Frenchman was hoist with his own petard. No diplomatist had ever been more outrageously duped. But, though duped, Napoleon was not discouraged; and if anything were wanted to prove that he, and not Bismarck, was the deviser of the proposed robbery, it would be the fact that, having failed to win over the latter as an accomplice of his meditated crime, the French Emperor now cast about to achieve part of its object in a more independent and less outrageous way. 'Once at Luxemburg,' wrote M. Benedetti, 'we shall be

on the road to Brussels.' But what on earth was their pretext for going to Luxemburg?

The Grand Duchy of Luxemburg, though inhabited by a German race, was a personal fief of the King of Holland, in the same way as Schleswig-Holstein had appertained to the Crown of Denmark. In virtue of, and to the extent of, their feudal sovereignty over these territories, both Kings had been members of the Germanic Confederation; but the Danish war had cancelled the membership of one, and the Bohemian campaign that of the other. Yet there was this difference between the two cases. Losing all his proprietary rights over the Elbe Duchies, the King of Denmark was for ever excluded from the Germanic body of nations. But the war of 1866 had only restored to the King of Holland his independence as to Luxemburg, which was previously limited by the Federal Constitution of Germany, while leaving intact his sovereignty over the Grand Duchy. It was open to him, of course, to join the new Confederation of the North, as for Luxemburg. Not only, however, did he decline to do this—and Bismarck thought it advisable in the circumstances not to force his will—but also demanded the withdrawal, from the German-speaking portion of his dominions, of the garrisons which Prussia had hitherto been entitled to keep there.

In this demand he was, of course, supported by France, who affected to see in the continued presence of King William's troops in a fortress overlooking her north-eastern frontier a standing menace to her security; and France, moreover, resolved to avert this alleged danger from herself by turning it against her German neighbour. In other words, Napoleon determined to acquire possession of Luxemburg by sleight or might. Getting only guarded and equivocal answers to his overtures at Berlin, which he nevertheless interpreted as a promise on the part of Prussia to recognise the *fait accompli* of the cession of the Grand Duchy, he addressed himself direct to the King of Holland.

Would the latter transfer to him his rights over Luxemburg<sup>2</sup> for a money indemnity and a French guarantee of the integrity of his Dutch dominions, as against the possible designs of Germany? 'Well,' replied the King, 'I will not say "No."'

This was on the 19th March (1867), and, presto! on this very day the secret military treaties between Prussia and the South German States were published at Berlin. This most startling revelation was a silent reply to a bellicose debate in the French Chamber in the course of which M. Thiers thundered, or rather screeched out a virtual—'thus far, and no farther with your German unity'; and great was the hubbub and excitement in the two countries. What was the fury of the French on finding that these military treaties, which for all practical purposes made Germany one, were concluded *on the day before* the signature of the Peace of Prague, whereof one clause expressly stipulated an 'international and independent existence' to the States south of the Main! Duped again! The clause in question had been inserted at the almost imperious instance of Napoleon, and this was the way in which Bismarck had resented his arrogant interference with the affairs of Germany.

The publication of the military treaties had its effect at the Hague as well as at Paris. The King of Holland, who at first seemed inclined to entertain the barter-overtures of Napoleon, now took fright and drew back. He felt that he was between the hammer and the anvil, and that, instead of a French alliance guaranteeing the integrity of his dominions, it might only jeopardise them. He was quite willing, and even anxious, to part with Luxemburg to France; but he perceived that, in a war between France and Germany resulting from the transaction, he was sure to lose not only the single stake which he was minded to deposit in the great game of European politics, but all his other capital besides. Though he had sworn secrecy so

Napoleon, he resolved to make a clean breast of it at Berlin.

Very guarded in his tone, King William replied, in effect, that though his fellow-Sovereign of Holland was free to do as he liked, he must bear the responsibility of his actions. Another period of paralysing doubt now ensued at the Hague, during which the French brought all their diplomatic artillery into play to batter down the indecision of the King. At last, too, they succeeded, and a triumphant shout arose from their beleaguering lines. On the 30th of March the Prince of Orange announced to the Emperor that the King consented to the cession of the Grand Duchy, while begging Napoleon to make his father's peace with Prussia. The Emperor was all graciousness, and wrote an effusive letter to the King. The written word of the two contracting parties had been exchanged, and nothing remained for them but to sign the treaty. This, too, was on the very point of being done (1st April), when, for a merely formal reason, the completion of the bargain was delayed till the morrow. Meanwhile something happened at Berlin which made the King of Holland once more change his mind; and the 'heavy-bottomed Dutch,' who, after immense exertions, had at last been hoisted to the desired point by the diplomatic block-and-tackle of the French, flopped heavily down again as low as ever.

The German people had got wind of what was passing at the Hague. Bismarck, who was privy to the business, had taken care of *that*; and the nation began to growl and murmur as if with the ominous undertones of an approaching storm. Swiftly gathering, the storm at last burst, and its thunder found expression in a speech of Herr von Bennigsen in the German Parliament. Questioning Bismarck as to the truth of the rumours afloat with regard to Luxemburg, the chief of the National Liberals made an ardent appeal to the Government to maintain the integrity of the Fatherland even at the cost of a war with France, and his speech was

received by all parties with tremendous cheering. This was precisely what Bismarck wanted. The nation had spoken out, and there was no mistaking its meaning. 'The allied Governments,' said Bismarck, in reply to Bennigsen, 'hope and trust that no foreign Power will seek to prejudice the indubitable rights of German States and German races.' This was followed by a declaration of the Prussian Minister at the Hague that, in view of the outburst of public opinion in Germany, his Government would be forced to consider the cession of Luxemburg to France as a *casus belli*. There was no more to be said. The Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs now absolutely refused to sign the French treaty of cession and of alliance with France, and neither cajolery nor coercion could move him from his firm resolve.

Here, indeed, was a pretty pass for things to have come to! Napoleon felt terribly embittered ('ulcerated,' said M. Rothan) by the conduct of the King of Prussia and his Premier, who had, in his opinion, forgotten the services he had done them, broken their engagements, and scorned his offer of alliance—and all for a paltry patch of land which would have put him right with his countrymen, and reconciled them to the events of 1866. What was he to do? How extricate himself from the alarming predicament into which he had been lured? Undergo the humiliation of tearing up the written promise of the King of Holland, or enforce its performance at the point of the sword? Alas! his sword was rusted to its sheath, and, even if it could be drawn, it would not cut. Mexico had absorbed the marrow of the French army, and the rest of it was still in a hopeless state of unpreparedness. With neither an army nor allies, how was France to fight Prussia? Fight united Germany? No, not yet. Nevertheless a warlike stir now began in all the camps and arsenals of France, which drew loud and reproachful protests and threats from the Prussians. The Powers applied themselves to extinguish the gathering



flames which threatened to burst out into an all-consuming conflagration. Every diplomatic doctor had his remedy—all of them more or less unacceptable by Prussia; but at last Russia proposed the submission of the quarrel to a Conference of the European Powers. To this proposal Bismarck ultimately agreed, on condition that the invitations to the Conference should be issued by the King of Holland, and that the basis of its business should be—‘dismantling of the fortress, and neutralisation of the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg (while still secured to the House of Orange) under the guarantee of the European Powers.’

This was a very considerable concession to the demands of France, a very marked and unexpected change of front on the part of Bismarck. What had been the cause of it? In the first place, the King was by no means so eager as some of those about him to hasten the inevitable trial of conclusions with France. Secondly, Bismarck himself came to see that Prussia’s right to garrison Luxemburg had really now become doubtful, and he was unwilling to plunge the nation into war for anything but a truly righteous cause. But, thirdly, and more, perhaps, than all the rest, he was afraid to grapple with France while leaving on his left flank a very uncertain Austria, who had just rejected those offers of alliance from Berlin which were only to be accepted twelve years later (in 1879). There can be little doubt that this rejection of his offer of alliance at Vienna did much to make Bismarck abandon his attitude of *non possumus* with regard to Luxemburg, and to accept the proposal of a European Conference on his own conditions. The Conference (which was attended by England, France, Russia, Austria, Prussia, Holland, Belgium, and Italy) met in London on the 7th May, and in four days it had finished its formal labours. Peace—which was on the very point of being broken—was meanwhile thus preserved, but every one felt that it had only been patched up. France had compelled Prussia to withdraw from Luxemburg, but

Prussia had prevented France from entering it, and there was deep dissatisfaction on both sides. The Germans were exasperated that the French, even to this extent, had successfully interfered with their national development, and found but partial consolation in the fact that the danger to which they were exposed had hastened the military assimilation of the whole Fatherland. The French, on the other hand, sheathed their half-drawn swords with a revengeful curse that their predatory aims had again been baffled.

Before the Luxemburg difference became acute, King William had accepted the invitation of Napoleon to visit the great Exhibition of Paris; and now that the quarrel had meanwhile been compounded, there was no reason why he should not keep his word, and take his Premier with him. Accordingly, King William, accompanied, among others, by Counts Bismarck and Moltke, arrived in Paris on the 5th June—a few days after the Czar, with whom was Prince Gortschakoff; and the harmony of the meeting was only marred by the attempt of the Polish refugee, Berezowski, to shoot his Russian Majesty in the Bois de Boulogne. The Czar did not make so favourable an impression on the Parisians as the kindly, serious, and chivalrous King William, who, with his paladins, were the observed of all observers at that hollow and high-sounding Carnival of Peace—with its *fêtes* and banquets, its military displays, its show of millennial embracing, and its apotheosis of the Empire. While Bismarck grimly went about feeling the national pulse and preparing for the future, General Moltke took quiet ‘strategic walks’ in the neighbourhood of Paris. ‘Adieu, dear brother and friend,’ faltered King William with genuine emotion in taking leave of Napoleon and his lovely consort; ‘*Adieu*, but *au revoir*’—and the sentence was finished by the attendant Genius of History who sadly whispered—‘at Sedan.’

The events of the next three years all turned on Bismarck’s endeavour to complete his work by welding North

and South into one homogeneous whole. But it was equally the aim of Louis Napoleon and of Count Beust to frustrate or retard the accomplishment of this end. These were the two forces now at work in Germany, and it remained to be seen in what their opposition would result. Just before leaving for Paris, Bismarck had signed the preliminaries of an agreement with representatives of the Southern States touching the creation of a common German Parliament for dealing with the commerce and customs of the whole Fatherland. To the popular representatives of North Germany, already forming the Reichstag, were to be added deputies similarly chosen from the States south of the Main, and all these together were to constitute a new Assembly for legislating exclusively on matters connected with the trade and financial interests of the nation. This *Zoll-Parlament*—which, though created in July, 1867, did not meet till April of the following year—was a great step in advance towards the national goal, but it was by no means yet equivalent to a *Voll-Parlament* (full Parliament). And yet it re-aroused the susceptibilities of the French, who were fain to regard it as another flagrant breach of the Treaty of Prague. ‘Where is the “internationally independent existence” of the Southern States?’ cried the alarmed French. ‘Where is the “Union” of these States, which was to be the condition precedent of that existence?’ retorted Bismarck, who only regretted that the South had not yet formed itself into a separate Confederation with a Parliament like that of the North, for in that case ‘the two Assemblies could not have been kept apart longer than the waters of the Red Sea after the passage of the Israelites.’

Napoleon could only behold the progress of this process of amalgamation between North and South with passive impatience, but he was quick to find other means of asserting the immemorial right of France to meddle with the affairs of Germany. For scarcely had he extricated himself from the dilemma in which he had been placed by

his Luxemburg manœuvre, than he began to manipulate with Schleswig on the strength of his well-feigned solicitude for the due execution of the Treaty of Prague. Having failed to throw a bolt at the rising edifice of German unity from the vantage-ground of Holland, he now shifted his engine of assault to Denmark, but with as little success as before. The bitter feelings produced in Germany by all these proceedings were intensified about the same time by the famous Salzburg Interview. Accompanied by his consort, Napoleon travelled through South Germany to Salzburg to meet their Austrian Majesties. The ostensible motive for this trip on the part of the French Imperial couple was simply a desire to offer their personal condolence to Francis Joseph on the tragic end of his brother, Maximilian of Mexico, who had fallen a victim to that French habit of interference with the affairs of others which now roused the suspicion of the Fatherland. Germany did not believe that Napoleon's motive in going to Salzburg was altogether so simple as avowed, and the Emperor himself had reason enough to realise this fact in his passage through South Germany. At the various stations where he stopped, official courtesy, it is true, was frigidly observed; but at Augsburg some hospitable cheers were instantly drowned in angry hisses and yells. The Press, too, rallying round Prussia, raised its voice with one accord in no ambiguous tone against the foreigner whom it believed to be plotting against the unification of the Fatherland. Bismarck *professed* to be satisfied with the official explanations as to the meeting of the monarchs of France and Austria; but he still had his own misgivings, and these were shared by his countrymen who knew that the relations of South to North must have been freely discussed at Salzburg. The result was a decided quickening of the movement for their amalgamation, and for the bringing of all the flock under the fold before stragglers could be intercepted by the wolf.

High were the hopes of all men when, in the spring of

1868, the Customs Parliament met at Berlin—as the first representative body of the entire nation convened since the downfall of the Germanic Empire. ‘It needed not much discrimination,’ wrote an observer, ‘to read in the faces of those present the feeling that they were assisting in a great historical act.’ But this historical act did not yield the results expected of it by all sanguine and patriotic minds. Pave the way it did, indeed, but very slowly, and not with anything like the swiftness of the ‘re-closing waters of the Red Sea.’ ‘No horseman can afford to be always at the gallop,’ replied Bismarck to a friend who twitted him with the tardy march of events. One Separatist, knowing with what malevolence Napoleon was watching the approximation of North and South, and how probable it was that he would even draw the sword to prevent their union, took it upon him to warn the Customs Parliament against dealing with questions beyond its competency, ‘lest it might thus at last set rolling the (French) avalanche which had long hung threateningly on the mountain’s brink.’ Bismarck contented himself by assuring the Separatists that national blessings would certainly not be obtruded upon them, and by reminding them, at the same time, that ‘an appeal to fear had never yet found an echo in German hearts.’

Apart from the gigantic labour of consolidating the Confederation, and of settling its foreign relations, Bismarck had more than enough to do with the equally difficult work of fitting the annexed provinces into the complicated yet stable organism of the Prussian State. The real task of the conqueror begins when he sets himself to reconcile the vanquished to their yoke; and with respect to Hanover, at least, this was arduous enough. The chief recusant, naturally enough, was King George himself. A fugitive from his dominions, the royal Guelph had sought shelter at Hietzing, near Vienna, where he established a sort of Court, and continued to intrigue against Prussia much in the same way as English James conspired against Dutch

William in his exile at Saint Germain. His schemes of active hostility against Prussia, hatched under the favouring shadow of the Hofburg, were not unknown to Bismarck; and yet Bismarck ventured to brave the displeasure of his own countrymen by supporting King William in his desire to pension the Sovereigns whom he had evicted, but would not entirely beggar. By way, therefore, of compensating the deposed Monarchs for the loss of their crowns, handsome allowances were made them out of their confiscated revenues. But when the Chamber was asked to sanction the treaties under which these indemnities had to be paid, it displayed an opposition in the case of King George which Bismarck could only overcome by a threat to resign. The country could not see the wisdom of the generosity which conferred on the dethroned monarch an income equal to twice the amount of his previous civil list, thus supplying him with the sinews of secret war against Prussia, and Bismarck soon had cause to regret his own royal master's generosity. Instead of reconciling him to his fate, the compensation he had received from Prussia only seemed to add fuel to the flames of the deposed King's fury. Austria, who harboured this conspirator against Prussia, and France, who tolerated the presence of his legion, might be remonstrated with. But there was only one means, thought Bismarck, of coping with this still belligerent King without a crown, and that was by cutting off his supplies.

Having captured the enemy's guns, he was quick to turn them against their owners, by converting the interest accruing on the impounded revenues of the dethroned monarchs into a secret-service fund, to be applied in watching and frustrating their anti-Prussian activity. It was during the debate on this subject that the Chancellor used an expression which has now become historical. 'There is nothing of the spy in my whole nature,' he said, 'but I think we shall deserve your thanks if we devote ourselves to the pursuit of wicked *reptiles* into their very holes

in order to see what they are about.' Hence the expression 'Reptile Fund,' as applied to the means employed by the Prussian Government to combat the opposition of the Guelphs. Gradually that opposition was broken, but the weapon which broke it was not given up. It continued, indeed, to be wielded by the Government against all who resisted it in the field of domestic and even foreign politics. But whereas the term 'Reptile' was at first applied to an anti-Prussian scribe, it afterwards came to be reproachfully used by the opposition of all newspapers and writers subsidised to support the Government itself through thick and thin.<sup>1</sup>

The better to mark his displeasure at the conduct of the Conservatives who were dissatisfied with his policy of generosity and concession to the province and people of Hanover, Bismarck took 'leave of absence' for an indefinite time (February 1868), and again retired to his tent, like wrathful Achilles, with the view of bringing them to their senses. True, it was not long before they came to a better frame of mind; but still this breach between Bismarck and the Conservatives, who had always hitherto been his unquestioning supporters, now inaugurated that era of shifting party-ballast and permutation which has no parallel in any other nation, and which has often driven him to the verge of sheer despair. How to form a majority—natural or artificial—out of the kaleidoscopic fractions into which the Prussian, as well as the Federal Parliament, was split up—that now began to be, what it always remained, Bismarck's deepest and most distracting care. In most other countries the Premier is the outcome of a majority; but in Prussia

<sup>1</sup> The 'Reptile Fund' was given up in March 1892, when the interest on the Guelph Fund (about two millions sterling) was at last granted to the Duke of Cumberland, on the latter making a formal promise to the Emperor that he would never engage in any enterprises hostile to His Majesty or the Prussian State—a promise which was practically tantamount to the Duke's recognition of the events of 1866, and the abandonment of his claim to the throne of Hanover.

and Germany a majority is the creation of the Premier. Majorities may come and go, but he remains for ever ; and he must rule by virtue of his skill at yoking alternate, and often incongruous, teams to the car of State.

Bismarck's decentralising and other schemes were displeasing to the old Conservatives who, Prussian to the core, could not elevate themselves to the enlightened standpoint from which their previous leader now found it necessary to direct the course of affairs. It has always been the main secret of Bismarck's success that he has known how to adapt himself to altered circumstances. He has always been the man of the time, because he has always changed with the time. Fossilised principles of action never found a place in his political creed. A Chauvinistic Prussian until he had placed his country at the head of Germany, he now rose above the love of his 'narrower Fatherland,' and became the embodiment of the national idea and life. This, of course, implied a certain amount of self-sacrifice on the part of Prussia, which the Conservatives of the Manteuffel school were not altogether prepared to make, and there thus arose a certain antagonism between them and their old Chief. But while thus, in the Prussian Diet, Bismarck began to be hampered by those who thought he was going too fast, he was at the same time set upon by a party in the Reichstag that deemed his pace intolerably slow, and no less frequent than fierce were the debates in the Reichstag on constitutional and other questions, including that of capital punishment, on which Bismarck would not yield.

In the course of three short years, however, the structure of national unity had assumed dimensions as imposing as they were solid, and in closing the fourth and last session of the Reichstag (26th May 1870) King William recapitulated its labours with genuine satisfaction and pride. The results of these labours were a large variety of laws, all tending to weld together the tribes and races of the North



into one homogeneous nation—with common interests, a common army, a common polity, and a recognised and respected place in the European family of States. The process of amalgamation in the North had prospered beyond all expectation, but the happy day of its union with the South gave yet no signs of dawning. Germany was not yet united, and she could not, therefore, yet forbid her neighbours from drawing the sword. But, if at present unable to dictate peace, she could at least even now act the part of peace-maker; and it will always be remembered to her credit that she graced the beginning of her existence as a modern nation, and gave earnest of her willingness to undertake the mission of peace-keeper, prophetically assigned her by Moltke, by taking the lead in extinguishing a fire which might have burst into a European conflagration. The Cretan insurrection of 1868, and the consequent quarrel between Turkey and Greece, are still fresh in the mind of Europe; but it is forgotten, perhaps, that the Conference which met at Paris (January 1869) to adjust that quarrel, and to the decision of which Greece humbly bowed, was convened at the instance of Count Bismarck. ‘I have left none of the Powers (who signed the treaty of 1856) in ignorance of the fact,’ wrote M. Lavalette to M. Benedetti, ‘that the initiative (to the Conference) was taken by the Berlin Cabinet’; and the Envoys of the Powers at Berlin were instructed to thank the Prussian Government for its successful activity on behalf of peace.

It was different with the European Conference proposed by Napoleon (November, 1867) for settling the Roman question. To this Conference Prussia was invited, but she held aloof. It was certainly not in her interest to assist in relieving Napoleon from his Italian embarrassments, and thus make him free to act, as occasion prompted, against Germany. There was, indeed, reason to believe that Napoleon had approached Victor Emmanuel with proposals of an anti-German alliance; yet the occupation of Rome

by French troops would not only explode this coalition, but also hamper the Emperor's freedom of action on the Rhine. This, of course, suited the unity policy of Bismarck to perfection, and nothing would induce him to accept the French invitation to a Conference. It is true, he based his repeated refusals on merely formal grounds, but the above were beyond all doubt his true reasons, as M. Benedetti himself was acute enough to discern. Napoleon knew that the passage of the Main was inevitable, impending; so the grand and all-engrossing question for him was whether to accept accomplished facts, or prevent their accomplishment at the point of the sword. Bismarck was not unwilling to credit the Emperor with sense and moderation; but he knew that, just as he himself could not now, even if he would, stem the national tide in Germany, so Napoleon was not wholly master of his own will, and in all probability would have to yield to that public opinion of which he was the creature. Germany could not mind her business, nor tranquilly sleep, nor eat her food in peace, for the incessant sabre-rattling of the French. Industry languished, the minds of men were depressed, and emigration increased to an alarming extent. The relations of France and Germany, and the prospects of a war, formed the great topic of the time. Every country almost in Europe had its question. There was the Polish question, the Eastern question, the Fenian question, the Roman question, the North-Schleswig question, and the question of dualism and federalism in Austria; but the German question was the most engrossing and momentous of them all.

Bismarck avoided everything that might give umbrage to France; but none the less did he keep in view the realisation of his great life-task. He would wait until the South, of its own free will, came and offered its heart and hand to the North, but he would wait no longer, come what might of it. Meanwhile the Southern States showed

no great inclination to hasten the achievement of the '*ganzes Deutschland*' sung by the soldier-poet, Moritz Arndt, and the state of almost unendurable tension continued. Napoleon, on his part, had gradually come to the conclusion that his dynasty; which rested on the pillars of a popular favour that was beginning to show itself fickle, could only be consolidated by a war with Prussia, or by his courting an alliance with the Sovereign of a united Germany. But, irresolute as Hamlet, he could not make his choice; and meanwhile he remained the victim of that habit of conspiracy which, as it had been the instrument of his elevation to the Imperial throne, he hoped would also serve to maintain him on it.

By his attitude to the Roman question, Bismarck had shown that it was not the interest of Germany to act as mediator between France and Italy; and presently there occurred an opportunity of drawing Italy altogether away from France, and binding her to Germany—literally with bonds of iron and with hoops of steel. This was the contribution by Germany of ten million francs towards the making of the St. Gothard Tunnel—an act of splendid boldness, of far-seeing wisdom, and one which entitles Bismarck, among his other honours, to be regarded as the main author of one of the most magnificent triumphs of modern science. But it was also an act that all but precipitated the conflict which nervous Europe had been expecting for the last four years. The displeasure occasioned in France by Bismarck's daring policy was inversely proportionate to the satisfaction with which it had been hailed in Germany. The moderate speech with which he had dwelt on the wisdom and the necessity of cultivating close relations with Italy was denounced by the Chauvinists as a provocation to France. In the Chamber, the Government was angrily interpellated as to the railway Convention between Italy, Switzerland, and Germany, which was described as highly detrimental to the interests of the

Empire ; the Paris Press again blazed up with a recrudescence of that anti-Prussian fury which had of late been burning with a milder flame ; and there is no saying but that an international work of peace might then and there have been twisted into a pretext for an internecine war, had there not at this juncture occurred an incident that was eagerly seized upon as a more plausible reason for that inevitable rupture between two mighty nations which had so long been ripening in the womb of time.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FRANCO-GERMAN WAR

DISMISSED to their homes, with reassuring words from King William, on the day (26th May) they had voted the St. Gothard subsidy, the members of the North German Parliament were courting supine the afternoon shade of their orchards, and pondering the means by which the Main might at last be peacefully bridged. The ironclad fleet of the Confederation had sailed away on a summer cruise ; a large number of officers had received leave of absence till the usual autumn manœuvres. Count Moltke was cultivating the roses on his Silesian estate ; King William, in blithe holiday mood, was drinking the waters at Ems—that charming summer-retreat in the picturesque valley of the Lahn, not far from the birthplace of Stein, the Regenerator of Prussia ; and Count Bismarck was trying to restore his shattered health—shattered by more than the labours of a Hercules—among the woods and moors of Varzin, his lordship, or lairdship, in the wilds of Pomerania.

On the 30th June, M. Ollivier, Chief of the French Cabinet, declared that ‘at no time was the preservation of peace so assured as at present.’ In less than a fortnight from this

date France had declared war against Germany, and this was how the catastrophe had been brought about. On the 4th July the Paris *Constitutionnel*, while revealing the fact that the Crown of Spain had been offered to, and accepted by, Leopold of Hohenzollern, expressed 'surprise that the sceptre of Charles v. should be conferred on a Prussian Prince.' On the same day, the French Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin asked Bismarck's substitute whether the astounding news was true.' 'The Prussian Government,' was the reply, 'knows absolutely nothing of the affair, which does not concern it.' On this date also the Duc de Gramont, Napoleon's Foreign Minister, sent for Baron Werther, the Prussian Ambassador, who was about to visit the King at Ems, and begged him to tell His Majesty of the very bad impression produced in Paris, and indeed throughout France, by the Spanish candidature of Prince Leopold, and to entreat His Majesty to induce the Prince to withdraw on pain of a 'catastrophe.' 'Do you mean by "catastrophe" a threat of war?' asked the dumbfounded Ambassador. '*Oui*,' replied M. Ollivier, who four days previously had pronounced the political horizon to be speckless: '*oui, il y a menace de guerre.*'

Before an answer could possibly have been returned from Ems to his quasi-ultimatum, the Duc de Gramont (on the 6th) added fuel to the flames that had already seized hold of the French mind by replying to an interpellation in the Legislative Body, which there is every reason to believe he himself had prompted. With all respect, he said—and his speech was received with frantic applause—for the rights of a neighbouring people (Spain), France was not bound to sit still and behold a foreign Power (Prussia) deranging the balance of Europe to her own advantage, by placing one of her Princes on the throne of Charles v. In the candidature of Prince Leopold for the throne of Spain, the French Government and nation naturally enough beheld a source of considerable detriment to the interests of France, but

they also jumped to the conclusion that this detriment had been craftily and maliciously devised for them by Count Bismarck. This was what filled them with blind fury, this it was that almost deprived them of their reason. Pre-disposed, as they were at this particular time, to believe everything that was evil of King William's Premier, the French people lent a ready ear to the assertion of their rulers that they were being made the victims of a far-reaching and infamous intrigue.

By the beginning of July, 1870, Prince Leopold had been offered, and had accepted, the Spanish Crown (subject to the approval of the Cortes), after it had vainly gone a-begging for some time among several other ineligible candidates. The negotiations between Marshal Prim and the Prince were conducted with so much secrecy that their result came upon the world, especially upon France, as a decided surprise; but, it must be said, there is nothing whatever to show that these negotiations were due to the initiative of Bismarck. All the balance of evidence, indeed, is the other way. 'Oh,' said the French Ambassador at Madrid to Marshal Prim, on being informed by the latter of the *fait accompli*, 'Oh, I have noted well for some time back that M. de Bismarck has been trying to meddle with your affairs. . . .' 'You are mistaken,' replied the Regent, 'the overtures originated here.' 'You will contradict the statement,' telegraphed the Minister of State at Madrid to the Spanish Ambassador at Paris, 'that General Prim has applied to Count Bismarck in order to obtain the consent of the King of Prussia. The negotiations were exclusively with Prince Leopold, without our entering into any relations whatever on the subject with Count Bismarck.'

Being left to his own judgment in the matter, or perhaps even trusting his judgment all the more that it coincided with the opinion of his Chancellor, King William saw no reason why he should oppose himself to the inclination of Prince Leopold, when the latter, having decided to accept

the Spanish offer, came to Ems to intimate the fact as an act of courtesy due to the monarch, or rather the man, whom he regarded as the head of his family. But His Majesty expressly avowed—and the word of such a pattern King was altogether beyond suspicion—that ‘he had never encouraged the Prince to accept the overtures of the Spanish Cabinet,’ and that he had not been privy to the negotiations. As far, therefore, as King William himself is concerned, the French charge, that the ‘candidature of Prince Leopold was a Prussian intrigue,’ must be dismissed as utterly baseless. That, on the other hand, there was intriguing on the part of Bismarck, is a theory which must assume that, though the initiative in the matter of the Hohenzollern candidature did not proceed from Berlin but from Madrid, he was quick to perceive the end to which it might be turned; and that, in pursuance of this end, he assumed a passive attitude, allowing the King to choose a course which, had His Majesty been gifted with the commanding vision of his Minister in addition to his own pacific sentiments, he would assuredly have shrunk from adopting.

This, we say, is the assumption on the truth of which must depend the theory that the candidature of Prince Leopold was an ‘intrigue of Count Bismarck’; but it was an assumption about which the French did not much trouble their heads. In no mood for weighing evidence, they rushed to the conclusion that they had been made the victims of a Prussian conspiracy, and their rage knew no bounds. ‘Insulted again by Monsieur de Bismarck,’ resounded in the lobbies of the Legislative Body, resounded all through the nation, till the echoes reached the ears of all the European Governments; and the blustering Duc de Gramont braced himself up to the congenial task of demanding immediate satisfaction for the affront thus put upon unoffending France.

M. Benedetti was at once ordered off to Ems. ‘Oh,’ said the King, when the Ambassador was ushered into his

presence on the 9th ; 'I know what you have come about ; but we shall not quarrel over the Hohenzollern affair.' The French Ambassador may have had his own doubts on this head ; but meanwhile he gave the King to understand that, unless His Majesty 'counselled,' or 'induced,' or, indeed, 'commanded' Prince Leopold to revoke his acceptance of the Spanish Crown, there could only be one result of the incident—and that result was war.

Amazed, His Majesty replied that, in all he had done in the matter, he had acted, not as a King, but as the patriarch or chief of his house—a distinction which M. Benedetti refused to admit ; that his Government had carefully stood aloof from the whole business ; that he himself, as King of Prussia, had even declined to receive the bearer of a missive from Marshal Prim ; that he had only consented to give his opinion as head of the Hohenzollern family when appealed to by Prince Leopold, and that even then he confined himself to saying that he saw no reason to oppose the manifest wish of his kinsman ; but that, nevertheless, if the Prince, in view of the bellicose commotion excited in France by his candidature, was disposed to withdraw, he would approve his resolution. 'And meanwhile,' said the King in substance, 'you must wait till I have a reply from Prince Leopold and his father to my inquiries on the subject.'

Rightly judging the language of the pacific King, M. Benedetti concluded that he had resolved to 'agree to our demands,' and that, in seeking this delay, His Majesty merely wished to save appearances by leaving the initiative of retreat to Prince Leopold himself. But the other hypothesis which presented itself to the mind of the Ambassador, that it might after all be merely a ruse to gain time, was eagerly preferred at Paris, and Benedetti was again bombarded by importunate telegrams from his Chief. The day of the 11th passed, and no reply had yet reached the King from Sigmaringen in answer to his inquiry as to how the princely candidate regarded the French demand.



The day passed, and the sleep of M. Benedetti was troubled by a complaint from Paris that his language to the King was not sufficiently firm. Next day he was informed by His Majesty that a letter from the Prince would infallibly be in his hands on the morrow ; and soon thereafter he was commanded from Paris to 'employ every device' to assure himself of some proof of the participation of the King in the withdrawal of Prince Leopold.

But the King and his counsellors had been too clever for him ; for Prince Leopold, or rather his father on his behalf, had already telegraphed to Madrid his renunciation of the Crown ; and on the same day the French Government was informed of the fact—*not* through the King of Prussia, as it demanded, but by the Spanish Ambassador in Paris. To the French mind this was mortifying in the extreme ; for King William, in his ardent and honest desire to maintain peace, had virtually complied with Napoleon's demand, while making it appear as if Prince Leopold had acted entirely on his own initiative.

But this would not satisfy the ravenous men-wolves of the Boulevards. 'Repair at once to the King,' telegraphed Gramont to Benedetti at the dictation of the howling men-wolves, 'and exact from His Majesty, not only a public approval of the Prince's retirement, *but also an engagement that he will never again allow him to stand for the Crown of Spain.*' This imperious command reached M. Benedetti in the middle of the night, and early in the morning (of the 13th) he hastened to the lodging of the King. But the King had already sallied forth, and the French Ambassador darted off in eager pursuit. Seeing M. Benedetti hurrying along, His Majesty approached him, and, divining his object, handed him a newspaper with the tidings that Prince Leopold had withdrawn. The Ambassador observed that he, too, had received from Paris the news of the Prince's retirement ; whereupon the King remarked, with a complacent smile, that he supposed the matter was now settled

to the satisfaction of every one. 'Settled, your Majesty?' we may imagine M. Benedetti to have rejoined. 'Settled? Oh, far from that'; and there and then, on the public promenade of Ems, he made bold to assail the King with the peremptory instructions sent him from Paris. Well may a tablet have been let into the ground to commemorate the scene of that famous and momentous interview—few more momentous in the history of Europe.

'Approval of the present—and a pledge for the future—that,' said the Frenchman, 'is what we demand of your Majesty, and what we insist on having.' 'I urged my point with persistency, but the King absolutely refused to authorise me to transmit such a declaration.' 'I neither can nor will make an engagement of that kind,' said his Majesty, as, continuing his walk, he wished M. Benedetti a kindly good morning. This was about ten o'clock, and towards two the King sent one of his aides-de-camp to say that he had now at last received a written and regular intimation from Sigmaringen of Prince Leopold's withdrawal, that he sanctioned this step 'in the same sense, and to the same extent,' as he had approved his acceptance of the Spanish Crown, and that he now looked upon the affair as finally settled.

It was a great surprise to M. Benedetti that, though the King had promised to communicate to him direct the fact of Prince Leopold's retirement, he saw fit to make the announcement through one of his aides-de-camp. After the insulting demands that had been forced upon him on the open promenade before all the gay holiday-world of the place, it was little wonder that His Majesty would not expose himself to the risk of a similar humiliation, even in private. Twice did M. Benedetti—hounded on by ever more frantic telegrams from Paris—apply for an audience to reiterate his requests of the morning, and twice was he informed by the King's aide-de-camp that His Majesty had nothing to add to what he had already said. 'I have just

met the King at the station,' ran the French Ambassador's concluding telegram (on the 14th). 'He simply said he had nothing more to tell me, and that any further negotiations would be conducted by his Government.' Count Benedetti left for Paris, King William returned to Berlin, and, from the moment of their parting, France and Germany were in a state of war.

On the evening of the 12th July, two days before the actual rupture, Bismarck had arrived in Berlin from Varzin—whence he had been suddenly summoned by telegraph to the King's side. He knew what this meant, and his mood was high. Smoking his peaceful pipe, the parish clergyman was standing at his door, and the reverend man gave the Chancellor a neighbourly 'Good-day' as he swiftly drove past. Bismarck said nothing, but imitated the flourish of a sword-cut and dashed on to catch the Berlin express. Arrived in Berlin, he had a conference with Count Moltke and the War-Minister, who had also both hastily returned to the capital; and this council was followed by an interview with Prince Gortschakoff, who happened to be passing through. It was Bismarck's intention to post off next morning to Ems; but meanwhile there came the news that Prince Leopold had withdrawn his candidature, and every one in Berlin concluded that all danger of war was now over. But, lo! in a moment all was again changed. For to Berlin in the afternoon of the 13th was flashed the story which we have already related—how M. Benedetti had met King William on the Ems promenade and demanded impossible things of His Majesty, and how the latter, deeply wounded by this last act of arrogance, had refused to see the French Ambassador any more.

One of the first things Bismarck did, on receiving the King's despatch from Ems, was to telegraph its substance to all the representatives of Prussia abroad, and late on the same evening special editions of the *North German Gazette*, containing the brief and unpretending telegram, were dis-

tributed gratis in Berlin. And tremendous was its effect upon the capital, which suddenly burst out with an explosion of patriotic feeling long pent up. At Paris, too, a terrific hullabaloo had been raised by the publication, at Berlin, of the official telegram above referred to. It was pretended at Paris that, on the night of the 13th—in spite of what had taken place at Ems during the day—the hopes of maintaining peace had not wholly vanished, but that next morning brought with it the certainty that France must draw the sword to avenge the insult deliberately offered her by Bismarck's 'declaring to the public, that the King had affronted the French Ambassador.' Be it noted that the French Government itself did not accuse the King of having treated its representative with rudeness or discourtesy. No; what it complained of was the way in which Bismarck had boasted to all Europe, 'that France had been affronted in the person of her Ambassador.' But Bismarck's 'boast to all Europe' was nothing but a strictly accurate account of what had actually occurred. Was it logical, therefore, of the French to behold an insult in the public recital of an incident which in itself as they themselves confessed, implied no purposeful affront? Or was it reasonable of them to rave about a thrasonical Note from Bismarck to the Cabinets of Europe, when there was evidence of nothing, *and when there was nothing*, but a brief unvarnished telegram of the Prussian Government to its foreign agents, whom it was bound, in the circumstances, to keep informed of the course of events?

But then its publication? Well, had the nation not a right, at such a momentous crisis, to know exactly how it stood with its destinies? But what were the destinies of Germany compared with the sensitiveness of France, and the imperative duty of every other nation to spare it? The French, in fact, would behold in the published telegram nothing but a final and wilful provocation on the part of 'M. de Bismarck,' craftily contrived to render all escape

from war impossible ; while Bismarck, on the other hand, accused the French Government of catching up and twisting his innocent conduct into a justification for a war which it had long been meditating, but for which even the Spanish Crown incident had failed to furnish it with a plausible enough pretext. And not only was this the opinion of Bismarck, but it was also the strenuous contention of so patriotic and anti-Prussian a Frenchman as M. Thiers, whose arguments and whose eloquence, however, were drowned in the frantic cheers with which the Legislative Body greeted the announcement that the thirsty sword of insulted France had already leapt flashing from its impatient scabbard.

Orders had been at once issued to mobilise the German army ; but more wonderful than the celerity with which the disbanded warriors, casting aside the sickle and the pruning-hook, rushed to their various standards, was the universality wherewith the non-combatant portion of the nation rose to sign, as it were, and with its blood if need be, another Solemn League and Covenant. Germany was unified ; Bismarck's work was already done. There is nothing in all history that surpasses in grandeur the universal and instantaneous uprising of the German people in the memorable July days of 1870. Though hating war, the whole nation glowed with a holy thankfulness that the day of reckoning with its malevolent and implacable foe had at last come. Animated by a spirit of unparalleled self-sacrifice, it cast all its jewels, so to speak, into the melting-pot of the war-treasury ; and it was possessed by a fierce determination to do and conquer, and *not* to die. Forgetting the internecine strife which had divided them a few years before ; forgetting their differences of race, religion, and political aspiration—all the tongues and tribes of the Fatherland, from the Baltic to the Black Forest, and from Königsberg to Cologne, crowded around the standard of Prussia with the burning enthusiasm of the old Teutonic Crusaders ; and

the thrilling sound of the French war-trumpet was quickly drowned in the tones of a many-millioned German choir which, with the religious fervour of Cromwell's Ironsides, and the patriotic resolve of Bruce's Scots on the field of Bannockburn, burst forth into the hymn-like strains of '*Die Wacht am Rhein*.'

On the day after the King's return to Berlin (16th), Bismarck explained to the Federal Council how things had come to their present pass, while on the 19th the Reichstag met—it had only three sittings—and was opened by the King, whose intensely patriotic speech evoked a perfect storm of applause. It was answered by the voting of an address of unbounded devotion, and, what was more substantial, by a vote of a hundred and twenty million thalers. In the course of the first sitting Bismarck made his appearance, and briefly informed the House that he had just received from the French Chargé d'Affaires the declaration of war—an announcement which produced an indescribable scene of joyful excitement, the whole House rising to cheer, and the spectators in the galleries joining in with hurrahs and shouts of 'Long live the King!'

The declaration of war, as Bismarck pointed out to Parliament next day, as well as in a Circular Despatch to the representatives of the Confederation, 'was the first and only communication we have received from the French Government on the subject which has engrossed the attention of the world for the last fortnight.' The better, moreover, to open the eyes of Europe to the true nature of the motives for the war, Bismarck now revealed to the astonished world the existence of several Draft Treaties, written by M. Benedetti on the official paper of the French Embassy, by which Napoleon had repeatedly tempted and invited Prussia to ally herself with him in perpetrating great public crimes. We have already interwoven in our narrative the history of these dark and disgraceful negotiations, which fell within the period immediately before and

after the war with Austria (1866); and we therefore require to do no more than merely refer to the effect now produced by their divulgence on the public mind of Europe. Europe was thunderstruck when, on the 25th July, *The Times* revealed the predatory Draft Treaty of M. Benedetti (of the autumn of 1866), which was nothing more than a promise on the part of Napoleon to refrain from opposing Bismarck's German policy—at the price of Belgium. Vainly did the Duc de Gramont and M. Benedetti seek to explain away and weaken the force of the damning revelations made by Bismarck; for the only result of the mutual recriminations now indulged in was the further embitterment of the two nations, and the frustration of the mediatorial offices of the Powers in favour of peace. France had addressed an ultimatum to the Southern States, giving them the option between neutrality—in which case their territory would not be touched—or war, when they would be treated with the utmost severity. But the Southern States merely replied by placing their armies under the command of the King of Prussia; and the helmeted hosts of all Germany—marshalling in silent, swift, and machine-like array—swept on to their sacred and imperilled river, chanting the patriotic psalm which, not much less than the needle-gun, helped them on to victory.

In less than a fortnight after the declaration of war the united armies of Germany, numbering about one and a fifth million of men, had been mobilised, and the greater portion of this colossal force moved down to the Western frontier. And when the swift but silent work of marshalling was done, the King of Prussia, with more than seventy summers on his brow, placed himself at the head of this dreadnought and determined 'Watch on the Rhine.' On the evening of the 31st July, His Majesty left for the seat of war, being accompanied, among others, by Bismarck, 'who had some days previously partaken of the sacrament in his own room.' And in the train of Bismarck himself were the

chief functionaries of the Foreign Office which, like the army, had also been 'mobilised' for service in the field. Like Moltke, who 'looked ten years younger' when the war became certain, Bismarck brightened at the prospect of a life, full of hardships and dangers though it was sure to be, that would do him more good than all the medicines and mineral waters he had just been taking; and, buckling on his sword, the Chancellor sallied forth with his Sovereign to do the diplomatic work of the campaign at the head of a devoted band of privy-councillors, secretaries, cipherers, newspaper-hacks, couriers, and cooks. With these attendants, or '*Leute*,' Bismarck accompanied the King through the war, extemporising a Bureau, or Field Foreign-Office, wherever he halted, and transacting an enormous amount of work. The '*Leute*' lived much with their lord, often under the same roof, generally eating off the same table; and their devotion was rewarded by the confidence of their 'Chief,' as they called him, who, when in their midst, unbosomed himself on all conceivable topics, and laid down the law with the uncontradicted dogmatism of a Dr. Johnson among his mute admirers at the Mitre. Nor, happily, did the Chancellor lack his Boswell, in the person of his Press-secretary, Dr. Busch, to whom we are indebted for a record of much that his master said and did during the campaign.

On the 2d of August, King William at Mayence assumed command of the united German armies, praying that the God of battles might smile on his righteous cause; and in exactly a month from this date all France lay prostrate at his feet, bleeding, disorganised, demoralised, without an army, without an Emperor, without a Government. On the 7th August (the day after Wörth and Spicheren), King William, with Bismarck in his suite, left Mayence for the Upper Moselle. Passing over the Saarbrück battle-fields, Headquarters reached St. Avold on the 11th (where Bismarck vainly scoured the country in search of his two



sons, serving as privates in the 1st Dragoon Guards); and Henry on the 13th, whence the 'King and the Chancellor, on the 15th, made a sort of reconnoitring tour to within a mile or two of Metz, and saw Steinmetz.' On the previous day—the 14th—part of Moltke's great strategic plan had already been accomplished. On the afternoon of the 16th, Bismarck with the King arrived at Pont-à-Mousson, and the distant thunder of cannon in the direction of Metz told that the troops of Prince Frederick Charles had already leapt upon the haunches of the flying deer. For six mortal hours during that sanguinary and scorching August day did Bismarck's men of Brandenburg alone, against more than fivefold odds, hold with an iron and inflexible grip the struggling game—making up for their weakness by dashing Balaclava-like charges of cavalry against Gallic square and battery—till evening came and brought reinforcements that rolled up the French, and swept them back upon Gravelotte-St.-Privat, at right angles to the line of Bazaine's attempted escape.

This was the news that reached Headquarters at Pont-à-Mousson—twenty miles away—on the evening of the 16th; and by four o'clock next morning the Chancellor was in the saddle and away with the King to inspect the battle-fields of Mars-la-Tour, and make arrangements for the Waterloo that was to follow this other Quatre-Bras. The latter duty was the King's concern, but what absorbed Bismarck was the search for his soldier-sons, whose regiment, he knew, had hurled itself in self-sacrificial fury on the vastly more numerous French. The Chancellor's boys—one in his twenty-first, the other only in his eighteenth year—had behaved in action with a courage worthy of their father. The elder, Herbert, had received no fewer than three shots; while his brother, Count William (the King's godson), had come out of the deadly welter unscathed; and the Chancellor 'related with manifest pride how the latter, with his strong arms, had dragged out of the fray one of

his comrades who was wounded in the leg, and ridden off with him to a place of safety.' After searching about for some time over the bloody battlefield, the Chancellor at last found his eldest son lying in a farm-yard, where there were also a considerable number of other wounded men.

The Chancellor had left Pont-à-Mousson at break of day on the 17th; he was back by sundown; and next morning by three o'clock he was off again with the King to witness the bloodiest battle of the campaign—St.-Privat-Gravelotte. But what single eye could take in, or what single pen describe, the incidents of a battle which extended over a broken country (so broken that cavalry could not act) of more than seven miles, which raged with sanguinary fury for nine hours, and in which about 323,000 combatants took part? A modern battle is nothing but a series of detached engagements, and as Bismarck remained all day with the King, who commanded in person (for the first time in this war) on the right or Gravelotte wing, he could only behold a portion of the fray. But this was the part where the fighting was fiercest, and the carnage most frightful. Looking at the battle with the eye of a soldier—and by competent judges he has been pronounced to possess a very fine military instinct—Bismarck disapproved some of the operations. 'The jealousy,' he said, 'of some of our leaders was the cause of our losing so many of our men.' He was frequently himself under the hottest fire, but, heedless of his own danger, busied himself in carrying water to the wounded. To the King and his suite it was a day of great danger, fatigue, and anxiety; for the French defended themselves with desperate and all but victorious valour. But at last they had to yield, and the sun went down on the triumphant Germans who had purchased their victory at the price of more than decimation. Completely worn out by their incredible exertions, they bivouacked on the battlefield; and amid the ghastly havoc of the fray, by

the glimmer of a watch-fire, Bismarck penned a telegram to Queen Augusta at the dictation of the King.

The battles of the 16th and 18th had sealed the fate of Bazaine's army, which—such of it as had not been slaughtered—was now cooped up in and around Metz by Prince Frederick Charles, as a bird lies cowed in the net of the fowler. Strassburg, too, with other minor fortresses of Alsace-Lorraine, was securely invested, and Moltke's immediate object was how to dispose of MacMahon, who had retired on Châlons—thence either to fall back on Paris, or march by a circuitous route to the relief of Bazaine. Paris-wards accordingly through the shining valleys, and the bending vineyards, and the summer-robed bowers of lovely France, wended the Chancellor with measured steps and steady; and past the spot (at Clermont) where, but a few days before, a knot of tipsy French cuirassiers had made fun of a dog dressed in woman's clothes, which they dubbed '*Monsieur de Bismarck.*' '*C'est le langage de M. de Bismarck,*' shrieked the drunken troopers, as they pulled the anthropomorphic dog by the tail and made him howl: tipsy troopers all scattered to ruin now, and '*Monsieur de Bismarck*' striding triumphantly over their graves. Sometimes the Chancellor rode, sometimes he drove, and sometimes he used his legs. 'We left the carriage here,' wrote his famulus, 'to ease the horses, the Chancellor walking with Abeken at the head of the procession for a quarter of an hour, in great wide top-boots, which in size and shape reminded one of those we see in portraits from the Thirty Years' War. Next to him walked Moltke—the greatest 'war-artist' of our days, by the side of the greatest statesman of our time—on a French road leading to Paris, and I could bet that neither thought it especially remarkable.' '*À la guerre, comme à la guerre*' was the maxim which cheered the Chancellor in the vicissitudes of the campaign. In a rich and fertile country like France, flowing as never did the Promised Land with milk, and wine, and honey, it was generally easy for him

to sit at a bountifully supplied table; but the gamut of quarters was swept from top to bottom. Sometimes a lordly mansion, forsaken of its timorous inmates, supplied the Chancellor and his train with luxurious housing, and sometimes they had to content themselves with the lodging comforts of common tramps.

Meanwhile the gorgeous green of summer was beginning to deepen into the golden hues of autumn, and the grass to grow on the myriad graves of Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte; but where was MacMahon with the collected relics of the French army, which were the last hope and stay of the bitterly deceived and desperate nation, and which the Crown Prince had been endeavouring to discover for a week and more? '*Vorwärts, immer vorwärts*' towards the West marched the armies of the two Crown Princes (of Prussia and Saxony), in the hope of overtaking and giving battle to the Duc de Magenta at Châlons. At last, on the 25th of August, word was brought to the King's Headquarters in Bar-le-Duc, that MacMahon in hot haste had evacuated the camp at Châlons, and was marching to the north-west on Rheims with the apparent intention of doubling back on Metz. But meanwhile, until his intention should become unmistakably plain, the German leaders did no more than give a right half-front direction to the enormous host of more than 200,000 men which, on an irregular frontage of nearly fifty miles, was sweeping forward to the west, Paris-wards. For three more days this altered movement was continued, and then, on further news coming in, 'Right-half-wheel!' again resounded all along the enormous line, and there was now executed by the German armies 'one of the grandest feats of strategical combination that has ever been performed.' It was, indeed, the main achievement of the war, and was rendered possible by the splendid scouting of the German cavalry, which hung like an impenetrable veil before its own infantry while detecting every movement of the enemy's.

Alternately obeying his own military instincts and the imperative orders from Paris, MacMahon dodged and doubled in the basin of the Meuse like a breathless and bewildered hare. On the night of the 31st of August the curtain of darkness fell on him and his army, with the Germans closing in around him as hounds encompass a hunted stag—that curtain of darkness which was to rise next day on one of the most momentous dramas in the history of the world. Headquarters that night were at Vendresse—a townlet fourteen miles to the south of Sedan; and, early in the morning of the 1st September, Bismarck was up and away with the King and his brilliant suite of Generals and Princes to witness what was well known would be a mere *battue* of the French army. The appointed rendezvous was the top of the hill of Frenois, where a magnificent battle panorama, lighted by bright sunshine from a cloudless sky, burst upon the sight. Down in front wound the serpentine and silver-shining Meuse past the cliff-like citadel of Sedan, and away beyond on the Belgian frontier stretched that verdant forest of Arden, where Touchstone jested and Orlando loved.

The battle had already begun, as testified by the roar of artillery and the columnar smoke of burning villages. For no fewer than 618 German guns were gradually drawing an ever-narrowing circle of consuming fire around the doomed place of arms, and its defenders had little more than half as many cannon wherewith to thunder back reply. In numbers, also, they were to their assailants as nearly one to two; while the latter, moreover, were nerved by the moral force that springs from past victory, and commanded by leaders who had a well-defined plan of action. But no plan of action at all had the poor, distracted, disorganised, and demoralised French, save that which comes of wild despair. Despair on every side, for, turn whithersoever they will, they see nothing but encompassing hordes of helmeted foes who converge from every point around, and close in upon their

quarry in concentric, ever thickening, irresistible ranks. In vain does the fairest, bravest, choicest chivalry of France hurl itself in successive charges against the encircling battalions of Germany, as a new-caught bird of gaudy plumage dashes itself against the wires of its prison-cage; but, alas! the fairest chivalry of France is broken and shivered with Teutonic bullet and bayonet, as a furious wave is shattered into spray by an opposing rock. All through the bright September day raged the stupendous but unequal conflict—gazed upon by the King and his retinue from the amphitheatric slope of Frenois. And after watching the combat for nearly ten long hours, they saw the Gallic Gladiator sink beneath his wounds; but, until the fallen Gladiator should sue for mercy, it was not for the high spectators to elevate their thumbs. Rather, indeed, the contrary signal was given in the King's command to a park of artillery to play upon the fortress, into which in wild and mutinous confusion were streaming the exploded masses of the French army—converting it into a horrid slaughter-house and hell upon earth.

‘Not yield yet?’ exclaimed the King, who wished to bring things to a climax as fast as possible. ‘More artillery, then!’ But before the fresh batteries had reached the height whence they were to pour compelling death and destruction into the raging Pandemonium beneath, lo! a white flag was seen to flutter from the battlements. At last, at last, the Gallic Gladiator had held up an imploring hand.

Hereupon the King sent Colonel Bronsart von Schellendorf down into the fortress. Asking for the Commander-in-Chief, this officer was, to his utter astonishment, led into the presence of—the Emperor Napoleon!

‘What is your errand?’ quoth His Majesty.

‘To summon the army and fortress to surrender,’ was the brief reply.

The Emperor said that for this he must refer him to General de Wimpffen, who had but that day succeeded to

MacMachon (severely wounded) as Commander-in-Chief, adding that he would himself write to the King by a special messenger.

Back to the heights of Frenois galloped Colonel Bronsart with the astounding tidings that the Emperor himself was in the fortress, and would at once communicate with the King.

There was a moment of dumbfounded silence.

'This is, indeed, a great success,' then said the King to his retinue. 'And I thank thee' (turning to the Crown Prince) 'that thou hast helped to achieve it.'

With that the King gave his hand to his son, who kissed it; then to Moltke, who kissed it also. Lastly, he gave his hand to the Chancellor, and talked with him for some time alone.

Presently several other horsemen were seen ascending the hill. The chief of them was General Reille, the bearer of Napoleon's flag of truce. Dismounting about ten paces from the King, Reille, who wore no sword, and carried but a cane in his hand, approached His Majesty with most humble reverence, and presented him with a sealed letter. The King broke the seal and read:—

'Monsieur mon frère ! N'ayant pas pu mourir au milieu de mes troupes, il ne me reste qu'à remettre mon épée aux mains de Votre Majesté. Je suis de Votre Majesté le bon frère.                    NAPOLEON.

'Sedan le 1 Septembre.'

What a moment ! The King, as he well might, was deeply moved. His first impulse was to offer thanks to God, and then, turning to the silent group behind him, he told them the contents of the Imperial captive's letter. The Crown Prince with Moltke and others talked a little with General Reille, who stood apart, whilst the King conferred with his Chancellor, who then commissioned Count Hatzfeldt to draft an answer to the Emperor's missive. In a few minutes it was ready, and His Majesty

wrote it out sitting on a rush-bottomed chair, while another was held up to him by way of desk. He merely said that, while regretting their manner of meeting, he accepted the Emperor's sword, and requested him to empower some person to negotiate the capitulation of the army which had fought so bravely under his command.

The twilight was beginning to deepen when General Reille rode back to Sedan, but his way was lighted by the lurid gleam of the conflagrations, in and around the fortress, which crimsoned the evening sky. And, swift as the up-shooting flames of shell-struck magazine, flew all around the encircling German lines the great and glorious tidings that the Emperor with his army were prisoners of war. Envious moment of experience, and never to be forgotten by those who felt it! In marching and in fighting the troops had performed prodigies of exertion, but their fatigues were for the time forgotten in the fierce intoxication of victory; and when the stars began to twinkle overhead, and the hill-tops around Sedan to glow with flickering watch-fires—up then arose from more than a hundred thousand German throats, loud and clear through the summer night, the deeply pious strains of 'Now thank we all our God'; and then the curtain of darkness again fell on one of the most tragic, sublime, and momentous spectacles ever witnessed by this age of dramatic change and wonders.

That night the King returned to Vendresse, 'being greeted,' as he himself wrote, 'on the road by the loud hurrahs of the advancing troops, who were singing the national hymn'; while Bismarck with Moltke, Blumenthal, and several staff-officers remained behind at the village of Donchery—a mile or two from Sedan—to treat for the capitulation of the French army. For this purpose an armistice had been concluded till four o'clock next morning. The chief French negotiators were Generals de Wimpffen and Castelnau—the former for the army, the latter for the Emperor. The negotiations lasted for hours, but mean-



while had no other result than the prolongation of the armistice for five hours (4 to 9 A.M. on the 2d).

Between five and six o'clock in the morning, Bismarck was sleeping in his quarters, when he was aroused by his servant with word that a French General was at the door and wanted to see him. Jumping out of bed, Bismarck went to the window and discovered that his visitor was again General Reille, who had ridden out to Donchery to say that the Emperor desired to see him (the Chancellor), and was already on the way from Sedan. Bismarck promised to go at once and meet the Emperor, and in a minute or two afterwards, 'unwashed and unbreakfasted,' he was galloping away after Reille towards Sedan, leaving his room littered with Moravian tracts, and the *Daily Refreshment for Believing Christians*, with which he had read himself asleep after the exciting emotions of the previous day. He had not ridden far towards Sedan when he came upon the Emperor in an open carriage ('apparently a hired one'), in which were also three officers of high rank, and as many on horseback beside him. 'Bismarck had his revolver in his belt, and the Emperor's eye rested on it for a moment'—nervously, we may suppose. Dismounting, and accosting the Emperor 'as politely as at the Tuileries,' Bismarck asked for his commands. Napoleon, who wore white kid gloves and was smoking a cigarette, wished to know if he could see the King, to which Bismarck returned that this was impossible—His Majesty being quartered fifteen miles away.

Napoleon then asked whether His Majesty had not appointed a place for him to go to, and, if not, what Bismarck's opinion of the matter was; to which the latter replied that, having arrived when it was quite dark, he was wholly unacquainted with the neighbourhood, but that he would be glad to place his own quarters in Donchery at the Emperor's disposal. The Emperor accepted the offer, and drove slowly toward Donchery, but, hesitating on account of

the possible crowd, stopped at a solitary cottage a few hundred paces from the Meuse bridge leading to the townlet, and asked Bismarck if he could remain there. Though free from wounded, it was mean and dirty. "*N'importe*," said Napoleon; and I ascended with him a rickety, narrow staircase. In a small, one-windowed room, with a deal table and two rush-bottomed chairs, we sat alone for an hour—a great contrast to our last meeting in the Tuileries in '67. Our conversation was a difficult thing, wanting, as I did, to avoid touching on topics which could not but painfully affect the man whom God's mighty hand had cast down.'

After his interview with Napoleon, Bismarck rode to Chéhery (on the road to Vendresse), in the hope of meeting the King and informing him how things stood. On the way he was met by Moltke, who had the text of the capitulation as approved by His Majesty; and on their return to Bellevue it was signed without opposition. By this capitulation, 83,000 men were surrendered as prisoners of war, in addition to the fortress of Sedan with its 184 pieces of artillery; 350 field-guns, 70 mitrailleuses, 12,000 horses, and enormous quantities of military stores. Among the prisoners thus yielded up were the Emperor and one of his Field-marshal (MacMahon), 40 Generals, and 2825 various other officers, all of whom, by the special mercy of King William, were released on parole.

With the capitulation sealed and signed, Bismarck and Moltke now hastened back to the King, whom they found on the heights above Donchery about noon. His Majesty ordered the important document to be read aloud to his numerous and brilliant suite, which included several German Princes. At the same time he added a few words of acknowledgment for the grand results which had already been achieved, offering 'his best thanks to every one of those who have contributed a leaf to the chaplet of laurels and the fame of the Fatherland.' And now that an appeal *ad misericordiam*

had been put out of the Emperor's power, the King, accompanied by the Crown Prince, rode down to the château of Bellevue to meet the fallen monarch. 'At one o'clock,' wrote His Majesty to Queen Augusta, 'I and Fritz set out, accompanied by an escort of cavalry belonging to the Staff. I dismounted at the château, and the Emperor came out to meet me. The visit lasted for a quarter of an hour. We were both deeply moved. I cannot describe what I felt at the interview, having seen Napoleon only three years ago at the height of his power.' 'When the Emperor came out,' said Bismarck, 'his eyes were full of big tears. With me he had been less affected, and altogether dignified.'

And now, while the sad and broken-hearted Emperor was left to spend his last day on his native soil prior to his departure for the place of his detention at Wilhelmshöhe, near Cassel (once, strange to say, the residence of his uncle, King Jerome of Westphalia), King William, accompanied by Bismarck and the rest of his paladins, started on a ride through all the positions occupied by the German armies around Sedan. For five long hours, over hill and dale, from battery to battalion, and from corps to corps, through all the various tribes of the Fatherland in arms—rode the brilliant cavalcade, greeted with triumphant music and frantic cheering wherever it came.

Next day Bismarck rejoined the royal Headquarters at Vendresse, and was present at the banquet at which the King proposed the following toast in champagne, that was now served for the first time during the war:—

'We must to-day, out of gratitude, drink the health of my brave army. You, General von Roon, as Minister of War, whetted our sword; you, General von Moltke, wielded it; and you, Count Bismarck, have brought Prussia to its present pre-eminence by the way in which you have directed its policy for several years. Let us, therefore, drink to the well-being of this army, of the three persons I have named, and of everyone else who has contributed to our successes up to the present to the best of his ability.'

All Germany was frantic with joy and thankfulness; for

what victory had ever been like Sedan—so great, so perfect, and so momentous in its results? A thrill of intensest pride and exultation shot through the nation to think that its days of disunion, and consequent weakness, were at last over; that it had ceased to be a mere geographical expression, a scorn, a by-word, and a prey to the alien; and that it now stood forth in its true character as the first military Power in the world. The phantom of French supremacy, which had so long spread its vampire wings over apprehensive and submissive Europe, had vanished like a dissolving view in the smoke that had enveloped the battle-field of Sedan, and left ‘deep, solid, pious, and pacific Germany’ the mistress of the Continent.

This grand result had been achieved by community of the national arms, and it had no sooner been accomplished than a loud and fervent cry arose in the Southern States for consecration of the result by political oneness. The time had now arrived, as Bismarck knew it would without his trying to hasten it, when the South came and knocked at the door of the North. It was as if the sunshine of victory had suddenly matured the long-ripening fruit of German unity. And one proof of that unity was the energy with which the whole nation now lifted up its voice to demand Alsace-Lorraine as the price of the blood which had already been shed, and to protest against the rumoured intention of foreign diplomacy to mediate between the belligerents. Scarcely, therefore, had the victorious smoke of battle ceased to curl around the dead-strewn heights of Sedan, when, ‘*Vorwärts, nach Paris, immer vorwärts!*’ again resounded all along the German line, and was received with shouts of enthusiasm similiar to that which moved the soldiers of Xenophon when they re-beheld the sea. With Bazaine cooped up in Metz, and the army of MacMahon on its captive way across the Rhine, there was nothing now to impede the march of the German hosts on the capital of France—there to dictate the conditions of a

durable peace ; and forward accordingly they sped with a swiftness which, in little more than a fortnight (19th September), brought them in sight of-its gilded domes and glittering towers.

But had not King William, in entering France, solemnly proclaimed that he came to wage war 'with her soldiers, and not with her citizens'? And had he not, moreover, already given account of most of her soldiers? Yes, but other hordes of Gallic combatants were now, as it were, being stamped out of the ground like crops of dragons' teeth—all animated with a fierce resolve to treat not with the invader, neither parley with him, but to resist and oppose him unto the very death. 'Not an inch of our soil, nor a stone of our strongholds'—such were the words of defiance flung by M. Jules Favre in the teeth of the advancing Germans. But who had authorised M. Jules Favre to speak thus in the name of France, and to proclaim a war of extermination? Was M. Jules Favre Foreign Minister of the Empire? The Empire! Ah, that was already a thing of the past, gone and vanished with the Emperor like the ghost of Hamlet's father at morning crow of chanticler; and a Republic had already taken its place—a Republic, proclaimed two days after Sedan by a few frothy orators, in whose self-constituted power as Ministers now reposed the destinies of France. Acting for this Republican Government, as it styled itself, M. Jules Favre lost no time in declaring that, rather than conclude a humbling peace, France would immolate herself on the altar of self-defence.

On the 4th September—the day on which the French Republic was proclaimed—Bismarck left Vendresse and passed the night at Rethel, arriving next day at Rheims. Here, in the fine old coronation-city of the Kings of France—with its gorgeous churches, its historical statues, its Roman triumphal arch, and its vaulted acres of the finest champagne—Headquarters remained for nine days

until the Uhlan scouts should descry the towers of Paris. Swiftly passed the time, for there was plenty of diplomatic work to be done; and when Moltke, with pensive brow, and folded hands behind his back—the great Napoleon's musing attitude—was pacing the storied aisles of the cathedral, excogitating further schemes of conquest, Bismarck, in his sumptuous apartments at the mayor's, was penning circulars, dictating *communiqués* for the Press, and discoursing to guests on the political aspects of the war. One day he made an excursion with the King to the abandoned camp of Châlons, and on the Sunday he attended divine service in the Protestant church—the music being furnished by a military band—and listened with as much relish as his royal master to a sermon on the text: 'And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them until they came under Beth-Car.'

Beth-Car, that is Paris, the Philistines were now rapidly approaching. Leaving Rheims on the 14th, Bismarck passed the night at Château-Thierry, and next day arrived at Meaux, where he found quarters 'in the splendid mansion of the Vicomtes de la Motte.' Here the Chancellor was joined by 'two detectives from Berlin, who are to follow the Minister in plain clothes whenever he walks out.' From Meaux in a day or two, Headquarters passed to Ferrières, and installed itself in the magnificent château of Baron Rothschild, who, although he had previously acted as Consul-General for Prussia, had fled to Paris on the approach of the Prussians, leaving his mansion and its priceless cellars in the care of his steward. Here the Prussians found their Capua, and it was no wonder that they honoured it with their presence for more than a fortnight. The pheasants and the flocks of deer in the preserves around the château, with the exquisite wines in the cellar of the Jewish millionaire, furnished 'proviand' to the Prussian leaders of a kind which would have induced

Dugald Dalgetty to take service with them and with no others. Wishing to respect the property of his unwilling host, the King had forbidden all sporting in the park; but once when his Majesty drove away to a review of troops, Bismarck with Moltke and a few others slipped out into the woods to have a shot at the pheasants. 'They can't arrest me,' said the Chancellor, self-consolingly, with reference to the royal interdict, 'for then they would have no one to see after the peace.'

But Bismarck had very much more serious employment at Ferrières than feasting on 'pheasants stewed in champagne,' and lounging in his dressing-gown in the private cabinet of Baron de Rothschild. For, a day or two before his arrival there, the French, for the first time, had sounded something very like a parley. When dining at Meaux (on the 15th September), 'we were informed that some one had arrived from Paris with a flag of truce, and they pointed out a thin, dark-haired young fellow standing in the court in front of the chief's house.' This was Mr. (now Sir) Edward Malet, Secretary to the British Embassy in Paris, and he was the bearer of a letter from Lord Lyons asking whether Bismarck would confer with M. Jules Favre on the conditions of an armistice. England could have sent no more acceptable emissary to perform this act of mediation than the son of the man who had been Bismarck's favourite companion at Frankfort, in the days of the old Diet, and the wished-for meeting with Favre was easily arranged.

Dramatic enough was this memorable interview of the German Chancellor with the French Minister—the latter 'rather a big man, with grey whiskers coming round under his chin, a somewhat Jewish type of countenance and a hanging under lip,' given to tears, gesticulation, and other dramatic airs, full of sentiment and poetic feeling, a haughty suppliant for his overwhelmed country; the former cold and imperious in the consciousness of victory and irresistible

strength, courteous, but firm, terribly business-like in every word, and as deaf to the appeal of mercy—in a case where justice and prudence bid compassion shut her ears—as Moloch to his victims.

As might therefore have been expected, the interview at Haute Maison, as well as two others the same night and next morning at Ferrières, came to nothing. The real and primary object of Favre's visit was to discuss the terms of an armistice, which would permit of the convocation of a National Assembly to ratify the Provisional Government of National Defence, and thus furnish France with the proper means of negotiating a peace. But, instead of sticking to the business which brought him to the Prussian headquarters, the Frenchman was misled by his emotions into 'an academical disquisition on the present and the past, the pith and marrow of which were contained in a declaration of his readiness to yield *tout l'argent que nous avons*, while refusing to entertain the idea of a cession of territory.' 'Strassburg is the key of our house, and I must have it,' said Bismarck repeatedly; which caused M. Favre to declaim on the enormity of his thus seeking to humiliate and dishonour France.

This was at Haute Maison, but the conferences took a more practical turn at Ferrières, where the question of an armistice was exclusively discussed. '*Je demandai quinze jours*,' wrote Favre. 'Very well, Monsieur le Ministre, these are our conditions,' replied Bismarck, handing his interlocutor a document *written in German*, in token that the Unifier of the Fatherland was unwilling to look upon French any longer as the exclusive language of diplomacy. The discussion went on till Favre nearly swooned. 'At this point,' he wrote, 'my strength was used up, and I thought I should faint. I turned to dash away the tears which were choking me, and then, apologising for this involuntary weakness, I took my leave,' with a peroration about the heroism of the Parisians, and the German text of the



conditions of the armistice in his pocket. M. Favre returned to Paris and at once wrote to Bismarck that his conditions had been rejected by the Government of National Defence. In coming to this decision, it was doubtless moved by the conviction that good would come of the tour undertaken by M. Thiers to the chief capitals of Europe with the view of gaining over the Powers to a diplomatic, or even armed, intervention in favour of France; though Bismarck had most distinctly warned the neutral Powers against 'committing an act of cruelty to the French nation by permitting the Paris Government to flatter the people with hopes of intervention which cannot be realised, and can only serve to prolong the contest.' Notwithstanding this clear warning, the Provisional Government defiantly rejected the armistice conditions, and declared to the world that 'Prussia was resolved to continue the war in order to reduce France to the rank of a second-class Power; a charge which Bismarck at once sought to confute by the cold 'logic of facts.'

Meanwhile the march of military events was swift and decisive. Within a day or two of the futile interview at Ferrières, Toul had capitulated, Strassburg ('the key of our house') had fallen, Metz was beginning to despair; while the Germans had girdled Paris with a ring of batteries and bayonets, and scoured the country as far as the Loire. 'The Diplomatic Body in Paris,' wrote Favre to Bismarck, 'would fain be told when the bombardment is going to begin, and enabled to leave the city;' but, 'I regret,' replied the Chancellor, 'that I am prohibited by considerations of a military character from giving any information regarding the time and mode of the impending attack on the fortress of Paris.' Thus fair, majestic, Sybaritic and sinful Paris—bereft of its reason by the fumes of pride, mortification, and vain-glory—was fitted with its German strait-jacket; and yet it showed no signs of coming to its senses, but rather grew ever more furious in the hands

of its grim, relentless keeper. Its keeper pointed out to the Cabinets the consequences of this unavailing resistance on the part of the French, and disclaimed beforehand all responsibility for the terrible sufferings to which Paris would expose itself by its senseless resistance to the knife. This Memorandum to the Powers he penned on the 4th of October at Ferrières, and next day saw him, installed at Versailles within the shadow of the stately Palace of the Kings of France—believing, with Macbeth, that 'twere well it were done quickly,' and anxious, like the Bastard Faulconbridge, to behold—

'The battering cannon charged to the mouths,  
Till their soul-fearing clamours have brawl'd down  
The flinty ribs of this contemptuous city.'

At Versailles Bismarck remained five months (5th October to 6th March), quartered at the house of a Madame Jessé, who afterwards said some very hard things of her guest. But Madame Jessé was not the only one who slandered the Chancellor, for the journalists of Paris now proved afresh, what he once said of himself, that he was the best-hated man in Europe. As monkeys rattle the bars of their cage in impotent rage, and spit out fury at their captors, so did the Boulevard knights of the pen now pour forth their wrath on the man who was impatiently waiting for the battering cannon to open their mouths on the 'contemptuous city' with a summons of surrender. They described him as 'the incarnation of the evil principle,' as 'the Anti-Christ,' as the 'modern Machiavelli,' as a 'Vesuvius of a diplomatist,' as a 'shrewd barbarian,' and as a crime-stained ogre exulting in the blood of slaughtered millions. And not only was he heartless, godless, and unscrupulous as a statesman, but he was also a fiend and a Bluebeard in private life. He was always thrashing his wife with a dog-whip, and making her bear the burden of his brutal temper. He kept a harem, from which no shop-

keeper's daughter in Berlin was safe; and once, having become enamoured of a singularly beautiful nun, he hired some villains to hale her from her virtuous seclusion and deliver her up to him. It was reckoned in Berlin that he had at least fifty bastards. One of his mistresses, tiring of his cruelties, went to the theatre with a Russian nobleman, but thither she was followed by her savage owner, who lashed her bare shoulders with a heavy riding-whip. He turned his diplomatic knowledge to account by gambling on every European Bourse, and he had repeatedly broken each of the ten commandments.

But between the Chancellor and the nation which thus caricatured him there was little love lost, and his own opinions of the French character were more than sufficient to console him for the slanders of the Boulevards. Apollo, who had flayed Marsyas from conceit and envy, and from the same motives had slain Niobe's children, he regarded as the perfect type of a Frenchman, who could not bear that another should play the flute better, or even as well, as he. 'They are an uncleanly people these French,' he once remarked, and it is pretty certain also that he shared his wife's belief as to their utter lack of that godliness to which the virtue of soap, water, and rough towels is said to be so closely akin. 'I am afraid,' wrote the Countess to him from Germany, 'there may be no Bibles in France, so I will send you a psalm-book by the first opportunity, that you may read the prophecy in it against the French: "I say unto thee that the wicked shall be rooted out."' Of the French physique the Chancellor had but a poor opinion. 'The front of one of our Landwehr companies,' he once boasted, 'is at least five feet longer than an equal number of the enemy.' And while finding little stamina in the men, he could discover no beauty in the women. 'I have travelled a good deal through France,' he once observed, 'and don't recollect ever having seen a pretty country girl, but plenty of ugly ones. Any few beauties

there may be, go to Paris to find their market.' *Politesse de cœur*, argued the Chancellor, was not a native French article at all. Whatever might be said of the phrase, the thing itself existed only among the Germans, though the English also, it was true, might have something of the sort. Natural politeness, like an uncut diamond, was to be found among the common soldiery of King William; but the corresponding quality of the French was a counterfeit, begotten of mere envy and hatred. ✓

Moreover, some of the best men among the French people were furnished by the German element in Alsace-Lorraine, though this element was enviously kept down by the Parisians, who ridiculed and caricatured it. The French themselves, the Chancellor laid down, were composed of Parisians and provincials, the latter being the willing helots of the former. France was a nation of ciphers, a mere crowd. It had wealth and elegance, but no individual men. They only acted in the mass. They were nothing more than thirty millions of obedient Kaffres. Under one recognised leader they were very powerful, but not so much as the Germans could be, if not torn asunder by that infinite variety of opinion which sprang from independence of mind. Viewed ethnically, the Celtic race, he argued, was of the female sex, while the Teutonic people was the masculine element permeating and fructifying all Europe. Whenever German blood predominated, things went well; but where that died out, then farewell to order and progress. The feeling of duty in a man who submitted to be shot dead at his post rather than desert it, alone and in the dark, did not animate the French; but it inspired the Germans, and was due to the survival of their religious instinct which told them that 'Some One saw them, when the Lieutenant did not.' Theatrical posing was everything with the French, and any of them would readily submit to the lash, if speechified to all the time about liberty and the dignity of man, with appropriate attitudes. 'Strip off the

white skin of such a Gaul,' once said the Prince, in reference to the cruel manner in which the French were carrying on the war, 'and you will find a Turco.'

Meanwhile the Chancellor was busy enough with what might be called the diplomacy of the war. So indifferent was he to the form of government under which France should reconstitute herself, that he was even ready to assent to the restoration of Napoleon—could the latter have shown how he could maintain himself on his recovered throne, and keep his engagements. This is evident from the account of his secret negotiations with General Boyer, who, about the middle of October, arrived in Versailles as the envoy of Bazaine to treat for the deliverance of the Army of the Rhine, now rapidly verging towards saltless horse-flesh and shoe-leather in famine-afflicted Metz. Returning to Metz with Bismarck's ultimatum—which was exacting enough, General Boyer was next sent to England to lay it before the Empress. Her Majesty replied (through Count Bernstorff) by demanding a fortnight's truce with permission to provision Metz, and by declaring that she would never consent to a diminution of French territory (as the basis of a treaty of peace). Hereupon King William wrote to the Empress declining to continue the negotiation; while Bismarck telegraphed, through Prince Frederick Charles, to Marshal Bazaine, 'that the proposals reaching him from London were absolutely unacceptable, and that, to his great regret, he no longer saw any chance of arriving at any result by political negotiations.'

Within four days after this, famine-stricken, disease-consumed, and despairing Metz had unconditionally surrendered; and the Army of the Rhine, consisting of about 173,000 men, including 3 field-m Marshals, 50 generals, and 6000 officers, with more than 1400 various kinds of guns and immense quantities of other arms and military stores—this army, the last hope and stay of the Empire, fell into the hands of the Germans. At Sedan, the Empire had been

seriously though not mortally wounded. It was now stone-dead; but still, it is interesting to speculate as to what might have been the future of France, had Bazaine and the Empress accepted the terms on which Bismarck was willing to allow the moribund Empire the benefit of medico-military treatment. Finding, at last, that it could not be galvanised into life enough to hold a valid treaty-signing pen, he gave it the *coup de grâce* and set to nursing the infant Republic out of its nonage, the sooner to have in it a responsible party to the peace which was his sole aim.

As early as the 9th October, a week before the arrival of General Boyer at Versailles, and little more than a fortnight after the failure of the armistice negotiations with Favre at Ferrières, Bismarck of his own accord had offered the Paris Government a fresh opportunity of freeing France, by means of the elections, from an anarchy which rendered peace negotiations impossible. This generous offer was communicated to the Paris Government by the American General Burnside, but he soon returned to Versailles disappointed of his mediatorial hopes, and with the impression that Paris was nothing but a mere 'Bedlam of monkeys.' Immediately afterwards, M. Gambetta—the chief '*fou furieux*' in all this '*hôpital de fous*'—left Paris in a balloon, and the first thing he did on reaching the earth was to protest against the popular elections (to the Constituent Assembly), which had been originally fixed for the 2d October, but postponed till the 16th. The Provisional Government was still evidently resolved not to negotiate till the last German had been driven from the soil of France; so there was plainly nothing left for the Germans but to compel a satisfactory peace by force of arms, even though Paris itself should be overwhelmed by the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Louder and louder, therefore, did the railway bridges begin to creak and groan under the weight of the huge siege-guns which, with their mountain-stores of volcano-

fuel, were being swiftly transported from Germany to rain relentless fire and iron on the doomed yet dogged city. And so terribly in earnest seemed the Germans, and so loud and alarming grew the beleaguering pother, that Europe began to shudder at the idea of the frightful and unexampled catastrophe about to befall that fair and much-frequented world-city, with its millions of innocent inhabitants, and its priceless treasures of art, science, and historical associations. Europe, we say, was moved with pity and alarm, and its feelings were expressed by Lord Granville who, like another Abraham interceding for the Cities of the Plain, made a final and almost suppliant appeal to Prussia on behalf of beleaguered Paris. Bismarck again admitted the enormity of the disaster which a bombardment of Paris would entail, but pointed out that every other means of bringing the 'Bedlam' city to its senses had been exhausted. Yielding at last to the solicitations of the neutral Powers, M. Thiers arrived at Versailles on the 31st October to treat for an armistice, which again had for its object the convocation of a National Assembly. This was the second formal attempt of the French to negotiate a truce, and, like the previous effort of Jules Favre, it failed.

On the very day (31st October) when M. Thiers arrived at Versailles to treat, but vainly, for a truce, a notable thing was happening at St. Petersburg. For on that day Prince Gortschakoff stood forth and boldly declared to bewildered Europe that Russia was resolved to be no longer bound by the Paris Treaty of 1856, which, among other things, restricted Russia's naval action in the Black Sea—to all intents and purposes a Russian lake. '*La Russie ne boude pas, elle se recueille*'—such was the watchword adopted by Prince Gortschakoff on taking office after the Crimean War. Under him Russia had, indeed, collected herself for the desired opportunity which was now come; and with an easy effort she had suddenly shaken off

the fetters imposed upon her by her foes in the hour of her helpless prostration and defeat. By her neutral, yet watchful attitude—eye on Vienna, with hand on sword-hilt—Russia had prevented Austria from falling on the flank of struggling Germany. Again, on receiving the news of Sedan at Moscow, the Czar had given a banquet and drunk the health of his royal uncle of Prussia; and he had conferred his highest decoration—the Order of St. George—on Moltke, the winner of that unparalleled victory. The Czar had done all this and more, and he was now to reap the reward of his attachment to the cause of Prussia.

England, protested Lord Granville, could not admit the right of Russia to repudiate in this cavalier manner a Treaty from which she could only be set free by the collective assent of the co-signatory Powers; and he hinted, with a well-feigned appearance of seriousness, at future complications and the like. ‘Future complications!’ exclaimed Bismarck, with a contemptuous smile, on receiving his Lordship’s despatch; ‘parliamentary specchifiers, who will risk nothing. The stress lies on the word “future.” That is the sort of talk when people mean to do nothing.’ Resolved as Bismarck, therefore, was to let the Russians have their own way, and even help them to attain it, his only care was how to do this in the manner least objectionable to England. The Black Sea Clause had been knocked on the head, and was already as dead as a door-nail; but there was no reason why it should be flung into a ditch like a dog, and not interred with the decent ceremony of undertakers’ woe. There is nothing like an open grave, and a common object of grief, for reconciling estranged kinsmen. Thus, too, doubtless thought Bismarck, when he proposed that the Powers should meet and wail a doleful dirge over the lamented body of their lifeless offspring. Ingenious idea! A coroner’s inquest, in the shape of a diplomatic Conference, to sit on the murdered body of the Black Sea Clause!



On the 17th January, 1871, the inquest was formally opened in London; and the European jurymen were gravely informed by the coroner (Lord Granville) that they had all met without any foregone conclusion as to their verdict, and with perfect freedom of speech and action. With one accord they then all affirmed the abstract principle that no State could quash its engagements without the concurrence of the other contracting parties; and the path of business being thus smoothed by a fiction and a formula, the Conference ended by releasing Russia from those engagements from which she had already released herself. International law had triumphed over autocratic caprice, and Europe had been spared the horrors of a universal war. The coroner's jury had returned a verdict of 'Found Dead,' adding that there was no evidence to show that a murder had been committed. No greater farce had ever been played under the sun; but England, in the circumstances, had plainly no other alternative than to take the leading part in it.

The curtain rose on the farce of the Black Sea Conference, as we have said, on the 17th January, as if to predispose the mind of Europe, by psychological contrast, for the grand historical and spectacular drama to be performed at Versailles on the following day. We have seen that, with the pæans of triumph with which the news of Sedan was received throughout all Germany, were commingled shouts for the immediate consummation of the national unity. The issue of the war was now certain, but the German people were too impatient to wait for its fruit until the complete fall of the tree. The fruit was already ripe, and, if not at once plucked, it might drop and be spoilt.

Listening to the voice of their peoples, the rulers of Württemberg and Bavaria, of Hesse and of Baden, invited Bismarck to treat with them for their immediate entrance into the Confederation of the North. The negotiations were conducted both at Munich and Versailles, and there

were times when Bismarck's heart sank within him, for the South was not so much carried away by the enthusiasm of the time as to offer itself unconditionally. Bavaria, in particular, insisted on a settlement which showed that she was inclined to look upon her union with the North more as a marriage of convenience than as a marriage of love ; but Bismarck was wise enough to console himself for the lack of sentiment with the solid aspects of the agreement. The conditions under which Bavaria offered herself to her Northern wooer did not at all accord with his ideal of perfect union ; but here again the Chancellor's practical sense triumphed over the doctrinaire demands of some of his countrymen. Better imperfect unity, he thought, than none at all. Better a few clauses in the marriage settlement unfavourable to the bridegroom, than stipulations that would prove the source of everlasting discontent and nagging on the part of the jealous bride.

Bismarck was very much worried and kept awake o' nights by the dragging of the negotiations, which at one time actually threatened to come to grief 'on the question of shoulder-straps,' but at last the Treaties of Union were signed. Some opposition to these treaties was manifested by the unity party in the Reichstag, which demanded still more centralised institutions ; but a telegram from Bismarck, threatening to resign rather than submit to any alteration in the new compacts, produced an overwhelming majority in his favour, and Germany at last was One. In the same sitting, Herr Delbrück communicated a letter from the King of Bavaria to King William, begging him, in the name of his fellow-Sovereigns, to assume the Imperial title as head of the new Confederation ; and an address was passed, praying His Majesty 'to consecrate the work of unification by accepting the Imperial crown of Germany.' His brother and predecessor had refused the Imperial crown, offered him by the Frankfort Parliament, on the ground that it was proffered him on insufficient legal title ; but, now that both

the Sovereigns and the subjects of the Fatherland had signed the deed of gift, he could no longer look upon the conveyance as invalid. There was some doubt in His Majesty's precise mind as to the proper form of his supreme title, but at last 'German Emperor' was decided on, and the 18th January 1871—the anniversary of the day on which the first King of Prussia had crowned himself at Königsberg (1701)—was fixed for the ceremonious assumption of the title in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles.

Was it possible for the boldest imagination to picture a more thorough revenge on the traditional foes of Germany, than the proclamation of the German Empire in the storied Palace of the Kings of France? History presents us with many dramatic contrasts, and with many astounding episodes, but none like this. With the shades of Richelieu, and the Grand Monarch, and the Destroyer of the Holy Roman Reich looking down upon them, did the Teutonic chieftains raise their heroic leader on their shields, as it were, and with clash of arms and of martial music acclaim him Kaiser of a re-united Germany. There was clash of arms and of martial music, but there were also hymns of praise and heartfelt prayer, such as was probably never before breathed in the halls emblazoned with *toutes les gloires de la France*. '*Le Roi gouverne par lui-même*,' shone inscribed on the ceiling of the Salle des Glaces; but the Kings of Prussia, said the preacher, had risen to greatness by adopting a very different motto: 'The kings of the earth reign under me, saith the Lord.'

It was after listening to a discourse on this text that King William turned from the altar—which was surrounded by a war-worn and brilliant multitude of Princes, Generals, officers, and troops, representing almost all contingents of the German army in the field. The King turned from the altar to a platform at the end of the hall, where waved a dense and variegated bower of regimental colours which had led the way to victory at Wörth and Weissenburg, at

Mars-la-Tour, at Gravelotte, and at Sedan. On His Majesty's left stood Bismarck, to use the words of an eyewitness, Dr. W. H. Russell, 'looking pale, but calm and self-possessed, elevated as it were, by some internal force which caused all eyes to turn on the great figure with that indomitable face, where the will seems to be master and lord of all.' Standing before the colours the King announced the re-establishment of the Empire, and then Bismarck stepped forth and read aloud a Proclamation to the German People.

'Long live the Emperor William,' cried His Majesty's son-in-law, the Grand Duke of Baden, after the reading of this Proclamation; the bands burst forth with the national anthem, colours, swords, and helmets were wildly waved, and the Hall of Mirrors shook with a tremendous shout, which was taken up and swelled without till the rippling thunder-roll of cheers struck the ears of the startled watchers on the walls of Paris. Every heart was moved, and every eye suffused with emotion. It was a great and never-to-be-forgotten moment. Little wonder that the Emperor-King, in embracing his son and in pressing the hand of his Chancellor, could not suppress his tears. The descendant of a ruler who, little more than a century and a half ago, had struggled into the rank of Kings amid the jeers and contempt of Europe, he was now the Emperor of the mightiest and most dreaded nation on the Continent. It was, perhaps, in the pious nature of His Majesty to ascribe this wonderful result more directly to the favour of Heaven than to the genius of his Chancellor; but the latter doubtless felt rewarded enough with the feelings of pride which must have welled up within his breast as, to the stirring strains of the Great Frederick's '*Hohenfriedberg March*,' he passed out of the Hall of Mirrors to sit at the banqueting board of the Kaiser of his own creating. His work had been completed. It was the proudest day of his life.

Growing from day to day, the sufferings of the besieged had now become unendurable. Famine, anarchy, disease, despair, and death were swiftly doing their work on the proud, defiant city. Once more, however—it was the day after the startled watchers on the walls had faintly caught the thunder-roll of Emperor-acclaiming cheers that ascended from Versailles—once more, however, did the imprisoned Eagle rise and tear with beak and talons at the bars of its iron cage, in one last furious effort to be free ; and then it sank back with lack-lustre eye, and bleeding, panting breast, ferociously resigned to its inevitable fate. No more resources within, and no more hope of aid from without. Intervention had not been attempted, not been thought of. Singular as it seemed to France, as Carlyle wrote, ‘Europe did *not* come to her rescue in gratitude for the heavenly “illumination” it was getting from France ; nor could all Europe, if it had, have prevented that awful Chancellor from having his own way.’ Diplomacy with all its arts—and by no Power were these arts more persistently, or more pacifically plied than by England—had said its last word ; and at last the blinded French were brought to perceive that there was absolutely nothing left for them to do but to treat with their vanquishers on the terms of the latter.

On the morning, therefore, of the 25th January, Bismarck was agreeably surprised by the arrival from the outposts of an hussar lieutenant, bringing with him a letter from M. Jules Favre ; from M. Jules Favre, who, it may be remembered, ‘almost fainted at the armistice conditions proposed to him by the Chancellor at Ferrières, and then left with a peroration on the heroic resolution of the inhabitants of Paris. Now, however, that their sublime heroism had succumbed to the gnawings of an empty stomach, M. Favre again begged for leave to come to Versailles, though it was no fault of his that he was not sitting in farcical conference with the representatives of the other Powers in London. For, in spite of the more

immediate work that claimed his attention in Paris, M. Favre had actually made bold to express his determination to take part in the Black Sea Conference. Here was a fine opportunity, he thought, to exert his eloquence, not against Russian treaty-breakers, but in the cause of afflicted France; so he applied to Bismarck for a 'safe-conduct to enable the Plenipotentiary of France to pass the Prussian lines.' But in vain. M. Favre felt the force of the satirical remonstrance addressed to him by Bismarck, and, indeed, he afterwards thanked the Chancellor for reminding him so vividly of the duty he owed his country. 'The language,' he said, 'of our inexorable conqueror agreed with that of my own conscience'; and so with frequent groans of anguish he journeyed to Versailles.

It was with subtle intent to force the hand of his visitor and bring things to an immediate climax that the Chancellor received him with a 'Too late! The Bonapartists are before you.' This had the due effect on the mind of Favre, who, trembling with the alarm of the foolish virgins, asked whether the door of negotiation was really shut against the Republic. But he was soon made to see that it was now his duty to conclude, at any cost almost, a truce for the election of a National Assembly, to take the place of the Legislative Body (of the Empire) which Bismarck threatened to restore. Of all the conditions of this truce, that which most excited the opposition of Favre was the proposed occupation of Paris by the German troops. On this point, indeed, he was inexorable, threatening to break off the negotiations rather than yield. The King and Moltke seemed to be equally stubborn; but here again Bismarck, pointing out the difference between substance and sentiment, induced them to give way on representing that the German troops would still have an opportunity of reaping the supreme reward of their valour and endurance; and at last, after much skilful fencing on both sides, the negotiators came to terms. It was agreed that there should

be an armistice of twenty-one days for the purpose of allowing the convocation of a freely elected National Assembly to pronounce on the question of peace or war, and that Paris should be revictualled; while the city, on the other hand, was to pay a war-contribution of 200,000,000 francs; its garrison, with the exception of the National Guard, which was to retain its arms for the purpose of keeping order, was to be declared prisoners; its walls were to be disarmed, and all its ring of outer forts handed over to the Germans. Bismarck had declared to Favre that the Maires, the journalists, and the members of the Government in Paris would have to precede the Germans into these forts as a guarantee that they were not undermined; but this characteristic condition he did not press, on Favre describing it as a 'humiliation,' and offering himself as a hostage for the loyal execution of the agreement.

Back to Paris sped the well-nigh broken-hearted envoy of the Republic, his way lighted by the lurid flames which, bursting from Saint-Cloud, served as a funeral torch to the dead-struck Empire; and shortly before midnight he was standing on the balcony of the Foreign Office, with the snow-swollen Seine coldly shimmering beneath. 'The artillery of our forts,' he wrote, 'and that of the German army were still hurling their terrific thunderbolts. Midnight struck. One more shot roared with far-reverberating echo that, growing weaker, at last died away, and then all around was still. It was the first silence we had experienced for weeks.' The war was over.

In spite of the furious hostility of Gambetta, the newly-elected Assembly met at Bordeaux on the 12th February, and, after a few stormy sittings, it deputed M. Thiers with two members (MM. Favre and Picard) of the Ministry of his own appointing, together with a committee of fifteen deputies, to proceed to Versailles and treat with Bismarck for the conclusion of peace. At Versailles the chief negotiators arrived on the 21st February, after having paid

their respects to convalescent Paris. Thiers asked the Chancellor his conditions. The answer was brief and plain :—All Alsace including Strasburg and Belfort, part of Lorraine with Metz, and an indemnity of six milliards of francs (£240,000,000!).

These were terribly hard conditions, but they were not nearly so hard as they might have been; they were certainly not so hard as the French would have exacted, had they been victorious; they were no more than barely sufficed to compensate Germany for the enormous sacrifices she had made, and to insure her against future aggression from the same quarter. Two hundred and forty millions of pounds sterling is a sum which seems to appeal more to the imagination than to the reason, but it is a sum which was not much more than a third of the National Debt of England in 1870; and Bismarck had provided the French negotiators with two eminent financiers—Herr von Bleichröder, a Jewish banker of Berlin, and Count Henckel, a Silesian magnate—to prove to them that not only was France capable of paying it, but also that it would barely compensate Germany for her enormous sacrifices of life and limb, of money and material. As for the annexation of territory, this, argued Bismarck, was the right of every conqueror; and in the present case the right of conquest was strengthened by the title of ancient and unjustly interrupted possession. It is now known that, from motives of policy, from unwillingness to leave germinating in the French heart the seeds of a too luxuriant revengefulness, Bismarck was not quite so eager for the retention of Metz as the military party; but to this party he had to yield, and present to M. Thiers a cold, inexorable front.

Nobly, skilfully, eloquently, imploringly, did M. Thiers plead for mercy and moderation. Six milliards! Arming himself with the authority of Rothschild, M. Thiers represented that this was a sum France could never possibly pay, and that it would be dishonest on her part to



enter into an engagement which she knew it would be absolutely beyond her power to fulfil. There was much passionate discussion of the question, but, before the English Government had time to carry out its purpose of interceding with him in favour of a diminution of the money-fine, Bismarck received the French negotiators one morning with the news that the Emperor-King had been pleased to reduce the sum from six to five milliards. Still, this did not yet content M. Thiers, who pleaded that two milliards were all that France could give, and as much as Germany wanted. This higgie-haggling was more than Bismarck could bear, and he lost his temper. 'I see very well,' he angrily exclaimed, 'that you are only aiming at recommencing the war; and in doing so you will enjoy the advice and support of your good friends the English.' He strode up and down the room, rebuked the negotiators for recurring to matters which had been already settled, and excitedly declared that his conditions were ultimatums. *Ah, c'est une spoliation véritable, c'est une vileté,* exclaimed M. Thiers springing up in anger; but his wrath was cooled by Bismarck calmly declaring that he had not French enough to understand or answer such a charge, and that, if his interlocutor wished to continue the negotiations, he must do so in German.

Fruitless as the desperate endeavours of M. Thiers to wring from the Chancellor a further reduction of the money-fine, were his frantic efforts to save Metz. On these two points the latter was as inexorable as Rhadamanthus; nor would he listen to the eloquent and patriotic appeal of M. Thiers on behalf of Belfort, a city which was purely French, and had never, like Metz and Strasburg, belonged to Germany. Bismarck seemed touched by his eloquent and earnest words. He replied that he felt for M. Thiers, and would be only too glad if he could make him any concession; but all he had to do was to obey the orders of the Emperor-King. Meanwhile he went out and was again closeted both

with Moltke and His Majesty. 'It seemed to us to last a century,' wrote M. Thiers. 'Moltke left, but the King had still to be seen, and, in spite of our impatience, Bismarck waited until he rose from table. At half-past six he went to His Majesty, and at eight M. Thiers had reaped the reward of his heroic exertions. He had saved Belfort.'

He had saved Belfort ; he had succeeded in reducing the indemnity by a milliard ; but, in all other respects, he had to yield with a broken heart to an overpowering fate. On Sunday, the 26th February, the Preliminaries of Peace were signed in the Chancellor's quarters at Versailles ; and when M. Thiers, in profound yet well-concealed emotion, had affixed his signature to the instrument, Bismarck took him by the hand. 'You are the last,' he said, 'who ought to have been burdened by France with this sorrow, for of all Frenchmen you have least deserved it'—an allusion, no doubt, to his protest against the war. Bismarck himself, radiant with joy, signed the Treaty with a costly golden pen which had been sent to him for the purpose several weeks previously by some admirers in Germany, and which he now called for, says M. Favre, with 'theatrical pomp.' 'I may promise you,' he had replied in acknowledging the gift, 'that in my hands, so help me God, it will sign nothing unworthy of German sentiments and the German sword.' That he had kept his word, was proved by the heads of the Preliminary Treaty of Peace. On the third day (1st March) after the signature of this agreement, an army of 30,000 German troops made a triumphal entry into Paris, after being reviewed by the Emperor on the plain of Longchamps. This was the crowning glory of the war, and it was shared by Bismarck, who rode in as far as the Arc de Triomphe with the victorious troops. It was exactly seven months since the war began, and now the legions of the Fatherland were chanting the '*Wacht am Rhein*' on the banks of the Seine !

The Germans remained in Paris till the morning of the

3d, by which time the Peace Preliminaries had been approved by the Assembly at Bordeaux and ratified at Versailles; and within a week of this time Bismarck was back in Berlin, leaving France to recover from her frightful wounds as best she might, and looking forward himself to the gigantic task of consolidating the Empire which he had now created. His homeward way, which resembled a triumphal progress, lay through Frankfort, where he had commenced his diplomatic career. Within a bow-shot of the Thurn-and-Taxis Palace, in which the squabbling old Diet sat, and in which Bismarck brooded over his schemes of German unity, stands the Swan Hôtel, where a little later—on the 10th May—was signed the final Treaty of Peace between France and Germany; and, as Bismarck passed through the ancient and familiar city, we can well imagine him comparing past with present, and murmuring with a smile of ineffable pride:

*‘Tanto molis erat Germanam condere gentem.’*

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE EMPIRE.

THE Treaty of Frankfort (signed 10th May 1871) was the corner-stone of reconstructed Germany; but even after the rough block of this stone had been dug out of the diplomatic quarry, it could not be chipped into shape and fixed into its appointed place without a painful amount of dangerous delay. Plenipotentiaries of France and Germany had met at Brussels (28th March) to convert the Preliminaries of Peace (26th February) into a definite Treaty; but a month elapsed, and no great progress was made in this direction. For, now that they were no longer directly over-

shadowed by the wings of the Prussian eagle, the Frenchmen began to pluck up a little courage and to whittle at their engagements, suggesting the alteration of this and the modification of that. In particular, they made a most resolute effort to procure a change in the conditions of payment of the war indemnity, which would have virtually reduced the five milliards to three or three and a half. But, in addition to this, the French Government had shown bad faith, or remissness tantamount in its effects to bad faith, as to the military stipulations of the Preliminary Treaty.

It was the 16th of June—the day on which the Emperor, flanked by Bismarck and Moltke, had made his triumphal entry into Berlin at the head of his laurel-wreathed troops, through endless lanes of captured cannon and the frantic acclamations of a proud and grateful populace—the final scene in the unparalleled drama of the great war. Did the sound of these jubilant shouts of victory, and the exultant music of triumphal banquets, float through the summer air even unto Paris, and, rendering the bitterness of defeat unbearable, goad the vanquished on to half-unconscious acts of desperate folly? Bismarck, at least, seems to have thought so; for, dismounting from the charger which had carried him through the acclaiming streets, he penned the following telegram to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs:—

‘I learn from the reports of our generals that your soldiers have occupied the ground reserved to our troops in the zones of Lilas, Raincy, and Romainville’ (around Paris). ‘Now, therefore, I have the honour to inform your Excellency that unless they at once retire behind their lines, our troops will attack you this very day at midnight.’

Intended to bring the French authorities to their senses, this peremptory telegram very nearly had the effect of depriving M. Favre of his; and ‘I read this incomprehensible message twice so as to convince myself that I was not the dupe of an illusion.’ What on earth did it all mean?

M. Thiers was having his usual evening nap, and could not be roused. But there was no time to be lost. M. Favre 'pounced upon his pen' (*sautai sur ma plume*), and telegraphed (in substance) to the Chancellor: 'For heaven's sake forbear; the whole thing is a misunderstanding.' To Marshal MacMahon, also, and to the Minister of War, he sent in hot fury, while orderlies scoured away at a break-neck pace through the darkness and 'torrential rain;' and half an hour before midnight Favre was able to reply to the terribly imperious Chancellor that the encroachment of the French outposts on the German zone of occupation was due to a sheer mistake, which had now been rectified.

Within a few days after the mutual ratification of the Treaty of Frankfort, Paris became the scene of an appalling and a chastening drama. The Commune—which for more than two months had defied the regularly constituted Government of France, defied the French army that, succeeding to the Germans, had placed the capital under a second state of siege—the Commune at last fell; but it fell not until after, Samson-like, it had involved the beautiful city of the Seine in horrible and irreparable havoc. Paris ran with blood and was all ablaze, as never before, in all its tragic history, it had bled or burned; and when this ghastly transformation scene of terror was over, the Germans looked, and, lo! they beheld the genius of moderate Republicanism seated triumphant on her French throne—with one foot on the disjewelled remnant of an Imperial crown, and the other on the extinguished torch of anarchic Democracy.

It was the regenerated France of this moderate Republicanism with which Bismarck, the ministerial Cæsar, now had to deal. Under its patriotic President, M. Thiers, the Government of the Republic was animated by loyalty to its engagements, and by the absorbing wish to get rid as fast as possible of the presence of the hated invaders, of whom about half a million still remained behind as a pledge for the fulfilment of the peace-conditions. Bismarck, on the

other hand, did all he could to facilitate compliance with these hard terms. 'It is not our aim,' he said, 'to injure our neighbour more than is absolutely necessary to assure for us the execution of the Treaty of Peace, but, on the contrary, to help and enable him, as far as we can do so without detriment to our own interests, to recover from the disaster that has befallen his country.' The Chancellor, indeed, practised this policy of conciliation to a degree which convinced him that he had grossly overrated the capacity of the French to feel gratitude, and 'that our hopes of reviving mutual confidence must still, alas! be characterised as premature' (in December 1871).

But we must now glance at the simultaneous development of Germany's relations to some of her other neighbours. Of these neighbours, Russia and Austria were by far the most important; and as for the former of these two Powers, the French war had only served to strengthen the bonds of her friendship—her dynastic friendship at least—with Germany. Acting on the principle of give and take, Russia had compelled Austria to remain neutral during the great conflict; and for this essential service Bismarck had not sought to hamper her in her efforts to shake off the trammels of the Black Sea Treaty. There was mutual satisfaction at the result, and this feeling found expression in a meeting of the two Emperors at Berlin in June 1871; but much more so in December of the same year, when a military deputation—including Prince Frederick Charles, Count Moltke, and several other distinguished generals, who had been decorated by the Czar for their victories over the French—repaired to St. Petersburg to attend the festival of St. George. In toasting these honoured guests, the Czar was most effusive in his allusion to the

'close friendship and the companionship in arms which had bound the two nations together in ever memorable days of old, which would also survive to future generations, and which formed the best pledge for the maintenance of peace and legal order in Europe.'

All this was clear and significant enough, but for none had it greater meaning than for Austria, who hastened to take her cue from the diplomatists of the Neva. But, indeed, Austria had already proved herself to be endowed with that highest kind of wisdom which consists in recognition of accomplished facts, and in submission to the inevitable. There can be little doubt that when, after Königgrätz, Count Beust, the rival and opponent of Bismarck's national policy, was called to the helm of affairs at Vienna, this was done with a view to devise retribution for the calamities of 1866. But the logic of events is stronger than the lust of revenge. Beust was prevented by Gortchakoff from giving the promised aid to France; and when the German Empire was at last proclaimed at Versailles, the inveterate but irresolute intriguer had no other choice but to offer the seeming hand of hearty fellowship to the young yet powerful nation, the development of whose destinies he had done so much to thwart. This exchange of friendly assurances was ratified in the following autumn (August 1871), when the Emperors William and Francis Joseph, accompanied by their respective Chancellors—Bismarck and Beust—met at Salzburg. Only four years had elapsed since Francis Joseph and Napoleon, at the very same place, had whispered hatred of Prussia in their mutual embraces; and now, with Bismarck standing by, the haughty Hapsburg made an admirable show of spontaneous sincerity in pressing his lips to the proffered cheek of the Hohenzollern chief of that Germany which knew Austria no more.

Austria had finally made up her mind to forget 1866. Not without justice did German writers boast, that whereas the first Napoleon, *vi et armis*, had to compel the monarchies of the Continent to become his allies, the neighbours of regenerated Germany approached her by irresistible force of political gravity. 'The German Empire,' said one of those writers, 'born of a war of defence, betrays no inclination to meddle with things beyond its own borders. It

threatens no one ; it forces no one to come to it. It is simply there, as the centre of the earth is there, and, behold ! everything is beginning to approach it.'

But this centripetal tendency of Germany's neighbours was to some extent the result of those centrifugal forces which had begun to inspire the statesmen of most continental capitals with the deepest concern. The demoniacal orgies of the Paris Commune had aroused the attention of Europe to the revolutionary embers smouldering under the structure of all society ; and to none did the subject suggest itself in a more serious light than to the German Chancellor. It was very sagacious of Bismarck to pave the way for perfect reconciliation between the two Empires, by suggesting the common pursuit of an object affecting, not so much their international relations, as their internal welfare and stability. How to deal with the social problems of the time ; how to disarm anarchy and revolution—were two of the questions gravely discussed at Salzburg ; and to a certain extent the discussion was productive of a common agreement. But the realisation of these schemes was retarded by press of more important affairs, as well as by the indifference of certain foreign Governments ; and it was not till ten years later that a positive step was taken by the Chancellor with the view of combining Europe against its common foe. Taking alarm at the assassination of the Czar Alexander, in March 1881, the Emperor William immediately requested Bismarck to consider what could be done towards inducing the Powers to check political murders by changing their laws of asylum. 'The main thing,' wrote the Emperor, 'will be to gain over England, France, and Switzerland, who have hitherto afforded refuge to political criminals.' But the project fell through, on account of the negative attitude of England. Russia, Austria, and Germany at once declared their readiness to attend a Conference at Brussels on the subject, while France made her participation in it dependent on the decision of



England ; and England declined. Switzerland, too, and other States, had replied that their attitude would have to be determined by that of the Western Powers. Nevertheless, negotiations continued to be carried on between Germany, Russia, and Austria ; but at last Austria too declared it to be impossible for her to come to an agreement on the subject with the other two Empires, and the latter, who had taken the initiative, were left to concert their own measures. Nothing more was heard of the maturing of these measures till the beginning of 1885, when the basis of an Extradition Convention, in the form of identical notes exchanged, was at last agreed upon between Russia and Prussia (and afterwards between the German and the Russian Empires) as a common precaution against the political revolver, the dagger, and the terrible Dynamite Fiend, which had begun to stalk across all civilised countries with such havoc-scattering hand.

The Czar and the German Emperor had met in the summer immediately after the French war ; and, in the autumn of the following year, Imperial uncle and nephew again exchanged assurances of friendship in circumstances which riveted the attention of all Europe for more than a week. In September (1872), the Czar—who was accompanied by his heir-apparent and his Chancellor—arrived in Berlin ; and next day the two Emperors were joined by Francis Joseph, who brought his new Minister, Count Andrassy, in his train. These were brilliant and memorable days for Berlin, with their balls and banquetings, their Imperial embracings and health-drinkings, their grand reviews and military manœuvrings, and their political conferences. Prince Bismarck, too, might well be proud of this meeting of the three Emperors, for it was all of his sagacious devising. Having achieved all he wished by war, he had now become a ‘fanatic for peace ;’ and his chief aim was not only to reconcile any possible foes of Germany herself, but also to reunite neighbours whose

quarrels might affect the security of the young Empire. 'The meeting of the Emperors,' said Bismarck, 'will strengthen the confidence of our friends in the preservation of peace, and show our foes how hard it will be to break it.' This was a gentle hint to the French, whose dreams of an anti-German alliance with Austria or Russia now began to dissolve. The meeting of the three Emperors marked the first stage in the consummately skillful policy by which Bismarck sought to isolate France from the rest of Europe, and thus minimise the danger of a war of revenge.

Of this tacit peace-alliance between the Emperors, ratifications, so to speak, were exchanged next year (1873), when Bismarck accompanied his master both to St. Petersburg and Vienna to pay the necessary return visits. The Imperial party, which also included Moltke, remained in the Russian capital for about twelve days (27th April to 8th May), and were treated with every mark of consideration and respect by the Court, from which society and the Press failed not—as in duty bound, though somewhat reluctantly, perhaps—to take their cue. It cannot be pretended that the German alliance found much favour with the bulk of the Russian nation, which had followed the German victories in France with unmistakable malevolence; and even the heir-apparent, at this time, was not without reason suspected of a decided predilection for the French. But the Czar himself was ardently attached to his uncle, and left nothing undone to enforce from others the semblance, at least, of hearty sympathy with his pro-Teutonic feelings.

The attentions which had been showered on Bismarck at St. Petersburg were again lavished on him at Vienna in the following October, which found him at the side of his master in the old Kaiserstadt. A wish to see the great World-Show was the ostensible object of his visit; but its real aim was to do what the Czar, accompanied again by his heir-apparent and his Chancellor, had already done in the month of June—return the hand-grasp of Francis Joseph

of the previous year. The German Chancellor was now again frequently closeted with Count Andrassy, in whom he found all the qualities of a statesman that could win his perfect confidence. As a general interpretation of the German Emperor's presence at Vienna, the outside world was content to accept the words in which His Majesty replied to the toast of his health. 'The sentiments of friendship,' he said, 'which were then' (at Berlin in the previous year) 'exchanged between us, and which have been repeated to me here in full measure, are a pledge of European peace, and of the welfare of our peoples.' And thus again the French hopes of revenge waxed ever fainter and fainter.

But shortly before the Emperor's visit to Vienna, a further stage in his Chancellor's policy of isolating France had been indicated by the presence of Victor Emmanuel in Berlin (September, 1873). Without altogether joining the Triple Alliance, Italy had thus expressed a wish to make common cause with its aims, and to live within the sunshine of its power. Three years had produced a wonderful change in the sentiments of Italy towards Germany. In spite of the fact that Prussia had conquered Venetia for the House of Savoy on the field of Sadowa, and notwithstanding that Germany had given Italy an unmistakable proof of her sincere goodwill in subsidising the construction of the St. Gothard Tunnel—an act, as we saw, which must be reckoned as one of the causes of the war with France; in spite of both these facts, the relations of the two Governments had been anything but cordial during the course of the conflict. But Italy was not long in perceiving that her most vital interests were identical with those of Germany. Above all things, both States were threatened by a usurping and aggressive Papacy; and as the thunder of the German cannon at Sedan had shaken down the walls of Rome, and with them the last refuge-rock of the Pope's temporal power, so it was in the interest

of Italian unity, as well as of civil liberty in Germany, that these walls should never again be raised. Thus both Italy and Germany had, at least, one sacred cause in common ; and this cause united them in a similar attitude, not only towards the Curia, but also towards France. For while Germany had every reason to thwart the French apostles of revenge, Italy was apprehensive lest, under a monarchical restoration, the Lily banner might be unfurled on behalf of the dispossessed and self-imprisoned occupant of the Vatican. These were the chief causes which dispelled the cloud that had threatened to gather round the relations of Germany and Italy during the French war.

An improvement in these relations had already been indicated by the visit of Prince Humbert and his consort to Berlin, in the spring of 1872 ; while their perfection was denoted by the arrival of King Victor Emmanuel himself in the German capital, in the autumn of the following year (1873). On his way to Berlin, the *Re Galantuomo*, by special invitation of Francis Joseph, had spent several days at the Hofburg ; and, in spite of bygones, the popular reception of the King at Vienna was such as caused him to remark that only once before had he been accorded a similar welcome, and that was when, at the head of his conquering troops, he entered Rome. Victor Emmanuel's reception in Vienna was tantamount to frank recognition, on the part of his Imperial host, of the events of 1859 and 1866 ; while the King's presence in Berlin—where no less enthusiastic plaudits greeted him, and where he was made the object of every conceivable honour and attention—was rightly interpreted as expressing his regret for the causes of previous coolness between Italy and Germany, as well as his desire to stand shoulder to shoulder with the new and powerful Empire against common foes.

What stamped the King's visit to Berlin with political meaning was the fact that his numerous train included his Premier, Minghetti, and his Foreign Minister, Visconti-

Venosta. When the latter first called on Bismarck, he found the Chancellor reading General La Marmora's lately published book, *A Little more Light*, which dealt with the Prusso-Italian negotiations connected with the war of 1866, and aimed at discrediting the statesmen of Berlin. But La Marmora's spiteful and sensational publication, appearing, though it did, shortly before the arrival of Victor Emmanuel in Berlin, failed to frustrate in any degree the success of the King's visit. The bluff, soldierly, honest, and outspoken *Re Galantuomo* found himself in very congenial company with the Iron Chancellor, who shared so many of his own popular qualities; and King Victor Emmanuel must have left Berlin with the sincere conviction, that he could not possibly have done better than identify his interests with those of the three Emperors.

His visit to Germany was another triumph to Bismarck ; and this victory was rendered complete when, in the autumn of 1875, the Emperor William repaired to Milan to return Victor Emmanuel's visit, as Francis Joseph, in the spring of the same year, had already done at Venice—in that Venice which had once been his. 'I have never experienced anything like it all my life,' wrote His German Majesty of his triumphal progress through the plains of Lombardy, and his enthusiastic reception in its capital ; while to the Italians the only matter for regret was that, owing to bad health, the world-famous Chancellor of Barbabianca, as they called the venerable successor of Barbarossa on the throne of the Holy Roman Reich, was not at his master's side. We can well imagine what were the feelings which animated the breast of Pio Nono, as, peering through his prison bars in the Vatican, he beheld the first German Emperor and the first King of Italy thus affectionately embracing each other. But the exasperation of the apostles of religion in Italy was not greater than the dejection of the apostles of revenge in France, to whom the meeting at Milan was a pregnant warning and a sign.

During all these years, the French idea of revenge was the element in the foreign affairs of the Empire with which Bismarck chiefly had to reckon. The prospect of continued peace for Germany varied with the changing kaleidoscope of parties in France. To all of those parties the Chancellor ascribed more or less bellicose intent; but from the Republicans he seems to have thought that Germany, on the whole, had less to fear than from any of the monarchical factions. Bismarck favoured the idea of a republican form of Government in France as it existed; while Count Arnim, the German Ambassador at Paris, felt prompted no less by his own convictions and interests than by the presumed leanings of the Emperor, or at least the Court party, to countenance the notion of a return to a monarchical *régime*. The Prince argued in favour of the Republic, for the twofold reason, that the Empire would be more likely to derive support from it than from a Catholic monarchy in its struggle with the Vatican, and that it would also be less likely, as such, to procure an anti-German alliance with any of the continental Powers; while the Count, on the other hand, affected to see in the democratic Government of France a real danger to the semi-absolute, or at least quasi-constitutional, dominion of neighbouring sovereigns. The Chancellor pointed out that the fall of the Republic would in all probability involve the repudiation of the indemnity, and strove to show, on general and more permanent grounds, that it was Germany's interest to favour the continuance of a French Government which would have to expend most of its strength in dealing with internal foes. It was this difference of political opinion between the two highest servants of the Empire which brought them into sharp personal antagonism that finally ended in open quarrel, and in one of the most interesting and sensational State trials of the century.

The German Ambassador at Paris, we said, was all in favour of facilitating a monarchical restoration of some kind

in France. Prince Bismarck, on the other hand, was clear and emphatic in his reasons for supporting the republican form of Government. 'You are to regard my instructions on this head,' wrote the Chancellor, 'as unconditional, and to refrain from saying or doing anything in an opposite sense.' This was surely precise enough. But it did not satisfy Count Arnim, who took the unconstitutional course of appealing directly to the Emperor, with the object of vindicating his views and converting His Majesty to his own way of thinking. Success in the latter respect, he knew, could only lead to the resignation of the Chancellor, as well as to the probable selection of himself as his successor. Failure, on the other hand, he must have been aware, ought to result either in his own retirement or subjection to the will of his superior. But though he missed his main object, Count Arnim yielded to neither of the resulting alternatives as affecting himself. He stuck to his post, and continued to carry on intrigues which, aiming at one man, imperilled the peace of all Europe.

In the spring of 1873, M. Thiers wished, by pre-payment of the indemnity, to hasten the evacuation of the still occupied departments; and the draft of another convention to this effect was forwarded to Count Arnim from Berlin, with the short and simple direction: '*C'est à laisser, ou à prendre.*' But, from some reason or other, the Ambassador saw fit not to communicate to the President the full text of the document. What was his motive? To achieve, suggest impartial judges, more than was bargained for by his Chief; to show, in fact, that he was the cleverer man of the two, and better able to guide the policy of the Empire. Be that as it may, he was in this particular matter guilty of irregular conduct so grave, that it subsequently formed one of the counts against him in a proven charge of high treason. The weighty transaction with which he had been charged fell out of gear. The diplomatists of Berlin, Nancy, and Paris were all at cross purposes. 'I cannot comprehend

any more than you,' wrote M. Thiers to M. St. Vallier, the double-dealing of a certain personage.' The upshot of the matter was that the negotiations were transferred to Berlin, and the German Ambassador at Paris had the mortification of hearing that the Evacuation Treaty, with the conclusion of which he was himself entrusted, had been signed (15th March, 1873) by Prince Bismarck and M. de Gontaud-Biron. Another man would probably have at once resigned. Count Arnim addressed himself directly to the Emperor, beseeching him to inquire how and where 'truth had suffered shipwreck,' and insinuating serious charges against the Chancellor. To this complaint, which the Emperor at once sent to Varzin, the Prince replied in calmly indignant terms, dwelling on his rival's habit of petty intrigue, and reducing, in fact, the issue between himself and the Ambassador to one of superior trustworthiness. Yet Count Arnim had powerful friends at Court, including, it was said, even the Empress, and he was not recalled.

About two months after the conclusion of the Evacuation Treaty, a monarchical coalition brought about the fall of M. Thiers, and Marshal MacMahon ruled in his stead. The event was regarded by Bismarck as favourable to the hopes of the Bonapartists, and, therefore, as a misfortune for Germany, whose enemies openly rejoiced at the turn of things. 'The Chancellor urged this eloquent fact in proof of the wisdom of the policy which, as responsible adviser of the Emperor,' he had directed Arnim to carry out in France; and accused the latter of having 'facilitated, if not directly caused, the change of Government, by thwarting his efforts to keep M. Thiers in power.'

Bismarck pointed out to him the serious consequences of his disobedience, and intimated his intention of taking such steps as would insure unity and discipline in the foreign service of the Empire. Instead, however, of resigning, the offender went to Berlin in hopes of making his peace with



the Chancellor. He was received by the Emperor, who said that he saw no reason for his recall from Paris, and expressed himself in a way which showed that he was not blind to the faults imputed to the Prince by his bitterest foes. The same day Arnim called on the Chancellor with purposes of reconciliation, but was driven away by words of wrath. The meeting of the rivals was stormy and dramatic. It was some minutes before the shattered state of the Count's nerves allowed him to speak, and the Prince was almost speechless with rage. He galled his visitor by the lofty superciliousness of his manner; he loaded him with reproaches. For several months, Bismarck said, he had robbed him of sleep and rest; he had delayed the Convention of March to overthrow Thiers; he had slandered him to the Emperor, and he had conspired with the Empress to bring about his fall.

The quarrel ripened. In the beginning of August (1873) the Bishop of Nancy, whose diocese included several parishes of Lorraine, issued a pastoral breathing the spirit of reconquest and revenge. In the absence of the Ambassador, the German Chargé d'Affaires was instructed to demand security against the repetition of such inflammatory words. The Duc de Broglie, while deploring their imprudence, replied that he had not sufficient means at his command to prevent their utterance. But the Chancellor was inexorable, and at last the French Government sent him the copy of a reprimand which it had addressed to the delinquent prelate. In less, however, than three months, out came a couple of other pastorals from the Bishops of Angers and Nîmes, who seemed to vie with each other in their desire to surpass the passionate appeals of their colleague of Nancy. Aware of what his Chief had done in the latter case, Count Arnim must have known what was expected of him with respect to a similar explosion which had fired the German Press, and threatened to destroy the appearance of amity between the Republic and the Empire.

The incident, in his opinion, was too insignificant to be noticed. 'The German Emperor,' he said, 'sits enthroned too high to be touched by the stone-throwing of tonsured Zouaves.' But Bismarck was of a different mind, and instructed Count Arnim to proceed against the bishops on the strength of certain articles in the Code Pénal which, to the shame of the German Ambassador, had been pointed out to his Government by a French journal. But the Ambassador wished to be thought a wiser man than the Chancellor. Perhaps, even, in this case he was. But his reasons did not satisfy his Chief, and it was therefore his duty to obey him. Instead of doing this, he argued, and doubled; so that at last the question was taken from his care, and he had again the mortification of finding that the satisfaction demanded by the Chancellor had been conveyed to him by the French Government through its representative in Berlin.

One more little incident, and the drama reached its climax. The French Government had thought of exchanging, as of old, Ministers with the minor German Courts—no great compliment to the Empire!—and Count Arnim wrote to the Chancellor for instructions on the subject. The latter merely expressed his astonishment that the Ambassador should want to know how to treat a question, about which nobody in Germany had any doubt. The Count returned to the charge, and worried his Chief with what the latter called 'feuilletonistic' remarks about the difficulties of his social and diplomatic position in Paris. His Chief rejoined that he had no time for such controversies, and that he claimed more obedience, and less initiative, from all his agents abroad. Count Arnim hereupon again complained bitterly to the Emperor, but before his letters reached Berlin his fate had been sealed. How the Chancellor at last managed to convert His Majesty to his will, is not clear; but at any rate, towards the middle of March, 1874, Count Arnim was informed of his transference from Paris to Con-

stantinople. The latter post had recently, at the request of the Sultan, been raised to one of the first rank; but Count Arnim could not help resenting his appointment to it. Had he foreseen that Stamboul was on the eve of becoming the engrossing centre of European diplomacy, his vanity and ambition might have been fully gratified. But he felt punished and degraded, and he resolved to have his revenge. He would show that he was a much better man than the Chancellor, and that, instead of being under, he ought to be over him.

Within a fortnight after Count Arnim had received notice of his appointment to Constantinople, a Vienna journal, *Die Presse*, made certain diplomatic revelations professing to emanate from Florence. As a matter of fact, they came from Paris. The documents in question consisted of several letters written by Count Arnim, when at Rome, to Dr. Döllinger and another ecclesiastic, with the celebrated '*Pro memoria*,' in which he set forth his views on the questions raised by the Vatican Council. At this time (April, 1874) the struggle between Church and State was at the height of its fury, and the publication of these papers added fuel to the flames. The mine had been well laid. The enemies of the Chancellor sang the praises of the man who had predicted the evil consequences of the Council, and whose advice, if followed, might have averted them all. Was not, therefore, Count Arnim a very much wiser man than Prince Bismarck, and ought he not rather to stand in the Chancellor's shoes?

Bismarck took in the situation at a glance. Closely following the revelations of the *Presse*, the *North German Gazette* published an elaborate despatch of his to Arnim (May, 1869), showing why he had refused to adopt the suggestions of the latter as to Prussia's attitude to the Council. Its effect was magical. The Prince's foes grew less blatant. They were further silenced by the publication of one of Count Arnim's reports, which revealed a decided

contradiction between the views therein contained and the pessimist tone of his '*Pro memoria*' written a year later. There was, indeed, strong ground for the suspicion that the latter document had been tampered with, before its publication, in a way calculated to increase belief in its author's gift of statesmanlike prophecy. The Count had been fairly checkmated, and threw off the mask. In a letter to Dr. Döllinger, sent to the *Augsburg Gazette*, he openly impeached the Chancellor's Church policy; while, in a Berlin journal, he denounced the publication of his report as a breach of all diplomatic custom. It had long been suspected that Prince Bismarck and Count Arnim were at daggers drawn. It was now known. The quarrel was not only complete; it could not be compounded.

Menacingly commanded to say what he knew of the revelations in the *Presse*, Count Arnim denied all responsibility for them. But, in saying this, he told a deliberate falsehood. He had himself sent them to Vienna through a German journalist in Paris, as was shortly afterwards proved. Meanwhile, untruth was brought home to him in connection with another Press intrigue, and he was placed on the retired list before he had time to enter on his post at Constantinople. The Chancellor had now put aside and rendered his rival innocuous. He was quite willing to be satisfied with this measure of justice and revenge. But there presently transpired something which forced him to fight the quarrel out to its bitter end.

Prince Hohenlohe, Count Arnim's successor at Paris, had not been long at his post when he reported that the archives of the Embassy were incomplete. A considerable number of most important documents were missing. Questioned on the subject, Count Arnim admitted that he had taken with him certain papers; and these he was asked to return to the Foreign Office. Some he sent back, but retained others, declaring them, from their peculiar contents, to be his private property, and necessary to vindicate

him in his quarrel with the Chancellor. He remained obstinate, and hinted at the decision of a court of law. He was plainly told that the case belonged, not to the civil, but the criminal judge. The Ambassador replied that he had no interest whatever in avoiding an inquiry, even by the latter. He doubtless thought that the Chancellor, with all his boldness and disregard of appearances, would never dare to prosecute a man like himself, of high position, with powerful friends at Court ; and that he would shrink from the unpleasant, and in many respects damaging, disclosures which such a course would be sure to entail. He was soon undeceived. All Germany, all Europe, was startled to hear that Count Harry Arnim had been arrested on his own estate near Stettin, one day in October, 1874, and brought to gaol in Berlin like a common felon.

The accused was ably defended ; the most ingenious pleading was displayed on both sides ; but the Court sentenced Arnim to three months' imprisonment on the minor count of his indictment. The mildness of this judgment excited universal surprise. Both the parties at once rushed to the Appeal Court—the Arnims, as deeming the sentence much too heavy ; the Bismarcks, as holding it to be much too light. But the country in general was satisfied that Arnim had simply been judged. An impartial court of law had condemned his conduct, while his impartial countrymen pronounced against both his actions and his opinions. Count Arnim, of course, had his own story—in some respects a very plausible story—to tell ; and there were many who believed, with him, that he had been made the victim of his jealous and unscrupulous Chief.

The main interest of the trial centred in the correspondence on French affairs which was divulged in the course of it. After perusing these State documents, thus dragged, against every principle of custom and expediency, into the garish light of day, the bitterest foes of the Chancellor were forced to admit that they proved him to be a high-souled,

sagacious patriot ; his rival, a vain and scheming egotist. Europe could not help admiring the clear and far-seeing statecraft of the Prince's masterly treatises on the affairs of France, as Germany could not help congratulating herself on escaping the dangers of an intriguer who aspired to control her destinies. Prince Bismarck did not, perhaps, succeed in doing vengeance upon his incompetent rival without sacrificing, in the eyes of other nations, much of his own dignity, and that of the German Empire. But what he lost in dignity abroad he gained in confidence at home.

Moved by the absorbing desire to be relieved of the presence of their hated conquerors, the French people had made enormous sacrifices and efforts, which showed them to be possessed of a truly Antæus-like power of recuperation ; and by the 5th September, 1873, the bitter five milliards, which only required to be wholly paid before 1st March, 1875, had been handed over to Germany. A few days afterwards, the last Prussian troops of occupation, commanded by Manteuffel, evacuated Verdun, and raised a triumphant shout as, crossing the French frontier, they swung along the road to Metz, across the grave-besprinkled plain of Mars-la-Tour, and through the ensanguined gorge of Gravelotte.

The great war was now definitely at an end ; and the only question was when it would be followed by another. For that it would soon be followed by another was believed by all who marked the course of things in France. '*Revanche*' was written on the banner of every party, and seemed to be engraved on the heart of every Frenchman. When the war of revenge would break out was the great question of the hour. France was preparing for it ; Europe deemed it to be impending ; and Bismarck was doing all he could to obviate what others pronounced to be an inevitable calamity. That a mild, civilian statesman like M. Thiers had been succeeded (May, 1873), as President of the Republic, by a

manly soldier of the stamp of MacMahon, was looked upon in Berlin as vastly increasing the chances of the expected catastrophe; and the odds against it seemed to be still further lessened when MacMahon's tenure of office (in November) was extended to seven years. For why, it was reasoned, should the Marshal have insisted on this permanency of his power, unless he wished himself to be the instrument of avenging his own personal defeat (at Sedan), as well as his country's overthrow? Moreover, if retribution were not his aim, what then could have been his object in introducing, as one of the very first measures of his administration, another military reform law, that, among other things, added no fewer than forty regiments of various kinds to the French army, which, for the rest, had been exactly remodelled on the Prussian pattern?

No sooner had MacMahon succeeded Thiers, than the Clericals, presuming on the countenance of the former, began to shout their war-cry with redoubled fury. The 'Kulturkampf' was now raging fiercely across the Rhine, where the Catholic foes of civil freedom were being placed in penal bonds; and thus the political rancour felt by all French Clericals against Germany was intensified by religious hatred of the bitterest kind. For in their eyes Bismarck was the ruthless despoiler of the Pope, as well as the pitiless destroyer of France. The interests of religion thus seeming to the French Ultramontanes to be closely bound up with the cause of revenge, it was little wonder that they gave vent to their feelings in torrents of impassioned eloquence, inciting the Catholics of Germany to open rebellion against the May Laws, and exhorting their own countrymen to prepare for the day of national retribution. The Bishops of Nancy, of Angers, of Nîmes, and of other sees, vied with each other in the violence of their pastoral tirades against Germany, her Emperor, and her Chancellor, till at last the patience of Bismarck became exhausted, and he demanded of the French Government

that the war-trumpets of the bishops should forthwith cease to sound, on pain of the German bugle at once taking up the note with an immediate call to arms. 'Germany,' wrote the Chancellor to the representatives of the Empire abroad (January, 1874), 'Germany is sincerely desirous to live at peace with France; but should a collision become manifestly inevitable, Germany will not be able to reconcile it with her conscience, or with her duty to her people, to await the moment that might appear most favourable to France.' And as Italy, the dispossessor of the Pope, no less than Germany, was the object of clerical fury in France, Bismarck wrote about the same time to Arnim: 'I am convinced we cannot leave Italy without help, should she be attacked by France without reason, or from reasons that also affect our interests.' Thus, by one of the Chancellor's timely 'cold-water jets,' as his warning despatches were called, the flames of anti-German fury among the French Clericals had been considerably reduced in volume; but what they lost in size they gained in secret force, and being confined in one place they only burst out in another.

They even spread to Spain, which was now involved in its own Carlist war; but the prompt despatch of a German fleet to the Bay of Biscay, after the brutal murder by the Carlists of Captain Schmidt, a German newspaper correspondent, together with the successful negotiations now set afoot by Bismarck among the Powers for the recognition of Marshal Serrano's Government, soon had the effect of checkmating the enemies of Germany in that quarter. The Schmidt incident had created great excitement throughout Germany. 'Thought I to myself,' said the Prince in the Reichstag, 'if Schmidt had been an English or an American, a Russian or a French correspondent, that would never have happened to him. I called to mind all the old humiliations which Germany had been compelled to endure by reason of her dissensions, and I said to myself, "It is high time to remind other countries that Germans, too, may



not now be murdered with impunity.”’ Mainly prompted, we repeat, by this incident, Bismarck had initiated a successful movement among the Great Powers for the recognition of Marshal Serrano’s Government, and thus the Empire won the sympathy of the mass of the Spanish people by its benevolent interposition on their behalf. The French felt that the Chancellor’s policy of isolating the Republic was succeeding to perfection, and their exasperation grew in proportion as the gradual realisation of this policy deprived them of their hopes of an anti-German alliance with some other Power.

Yet once more their drooping hopes were cheered by what seemed to be a favourable change in the international constellation, and they hailed this last ray of hope as the sinking traveller revives at the distant sight of a desert well. The *Drei-Kaiser-Bund* still existed; but, in the spring of 1875, the French caught up from Vienna the joyful tidings that this Imperial coalition was on the point of giving way to another triple alliance of a more beneficent character. Breaking away from the other two Empires, Austria would give her hand to Italy and France; and this Catholic League, sanctified and made invulnerable by the blessing of the Pope, would obliterate Protestant Germany, and thus not only pay off individual scores, but also restore the temporal power of Rome in all its ancient splendour.

That France would only be too eager to join such a league, every one knew full well; and, indeed, there were certain superficial appearances which induced the world to believe that she might actually be asked to do so. The political heavens looked very black indeed, and just at this particular juncture Berlin gave forth a low but ominous roll of journalistic thunder, which made Europe dread an almost instantaneous outburst of the storm. ‘Is war in sight?’ inquired the *Post*, an organ supposed to enjoy semi-official inspiration; and, after a disquieting review of the European situation, it came to the conclusion that ‘war certainly was

in sight, though it did not follow that the clouds would not disperse.' Now, such was the feeling of uneasiness and apprehension then prevailing everywhere, that this article had the effect of producing a regular 'war-scare,' which has now become historical. All the Bourses of Europe were thrown into a panic, and questions were put and answered in various Parliaments.

The relations of France and Germany even formed the subject of an alarmed discussion in the English House of Lords, and a correspondence passed between the Cabinets of London, Paris, and Berlin. The German Government made no secret of its uneasiness at the enormous increase in the armaments of France, and it admittedly asked its representatives abroad to draw attention to the significance of the French Cadre Law. These representatives also were summoned to a special conference at Berlin. That was all; and yet it was generally thought sufficient to prove the wish of the military party in Germany to anticipate France. France, at least, succeeded pretty well in convincing all but Germany of the pacific nature of her intentions. Her assurances on this head to England were most explicit; and it appears to have been the task, no less of the English than of the French Ambassador at St. Petersburg, to intercede with the Czar for the maintenance of that peace which Germany seemed bent on breaking. Prince Gortchakoff was charmed with the prospect, thus opened up to him, of intervening as a *Deus ex machinâ*. Said the Russian Chancellor to General Le Flô, who had received similar assurances from the Czar himself: 'I promise you to make representations to Prince Bismarck at Berlin (which I shall pass in a few days on my way to Ems, with my Imperial master), and the Czar will do the same thing to the Emperor William.'

The Czar and his Chancellor duly arrived in Berlin (10th May), but by this time the war-scare had been allayed. '*On a voulu nous brouiller*,' said the Emperor William to

the French military *attaché*, at a ball given by Countess Hatzfeldt, towards the end of April; '*mais tout est fini maintenant. Je tiens à vous le dire.*' The 'war-scare' had been allayed—as far as the Governments of France and Germany were concerned; but it still remained to reassure the European public, and to this agreeable task Gortchakoff and his master now addressed themselves. Bismarck had repeated conferences with the Emperor Alexander and his Minister, and the result of these was expressed in the words let fall by the Czar before his departure from Berlin. 'Russia's pacific task is easy, for no State wishes to make war. I have found the Emperor William and Prince Bismarck animated by the most peaceful sentiments. The co-operation of Germany in maintaining peace has never been doubtful, and it may now be regarded as completely assured.' At the same time Prince Gortchakoff hastened to telegraph to all the representatives of Russia abroad: 'The Emperor leaves Berlin convinced of the pacific intentions which prevail there, and which are a pledge for the preservation of peace.'

France's dream of an anti-German League had dissolved, leaving the bare and disagreeable reality of a *Drei-Kaiser-Bund* still courted by Italy. The grave misunderstanding between France and Germany was removed. The war-clouds were scattered, and Prince Gortchakoff was hailed by grateful Europe as the beneficent Cloud-Compeller. Is it possible that the vanity of one man could have carried him so far as to make him conjure up the spectre of a European war, only to reap the theatrical glory of seeming to allay it? That he had done so was at least firmly believed by Bismarck, who attributed to this incident Gortchakoff's great defeat three years later.

The political defeat here referred to was inflicted on Prince Gortchakoff at the Congress of Berlin (in 1878), at which the German Chancellor played so prominent a part in virtue of the very fact that his attitude throughout the

period of international diplomacy and war preceding the Congress had been strictly neutral and impartial. We need not detail the history of the conferences, the negotiations, and the consultations round the bed of the 'sick man on the Bosphorus,' which engaged the attention of the European Powers, including Germany, from the first appearance of the storm-cloud in the Herzegovina (1875), till it burst in thunder at Plevna and the Shipka Pass three years later, and threatened to embrace Constantinople in the ruin it scattered around. Though England grew apprehensive, Germany remained calmly indifferent. So long as the quarrel between Russia and Turkey remained in its diplomatic stage, Bismarck had done all he could to preserve the 'European Concert,' and thus maintain peace; but when war became inevitable, as well as throughout its course, his policy was based on the resolution that Germany should be made to 'pluck the chestnuts out of the fire' for no one whose interests were not identical with her own. It is true that there was a complete agreement of views between Austria and Germany on all current questions, and that the Germans might have to take the field were Austria compelled to fight in defence of her territory. But this was a contingency not very likely to arise, and otherwise Russia might do anything she liked in the East, to all appearance, for aught that Bismarck cared. Unmoved, but yet not unamused, he listened to Mr. Gladstone's ferocious fulminations against the 'unspeakable Turk' of Carlyle; he smiled at the grave suggestion of the historian of Frederick the Great, that the three Powers mainly interested in the 'bag and baggage' policy—England, Russia, and Austria—should submit their claims of inheritance to himself, 'as a magnanimous, noble, and deep-seeing man, with no national aims or interests in the matter.' Nothing could induce the German Chancellor to assume the rôle of dictator, arbitrator, or meddler. 'I shall not,' he said, 'advise our participation in the war, as long as no German interest shall be

called in question that may be considered worth the healthy bones of a Pomeranian musketeer.'

The war went on, Plevna at last fell, the Balkans were crossed, all Turkish resistance was finally crushed, both in Europe and Asia; the Peace-Preliminaries of Adrianople were signed; the Cossacks shouted to behold at last the sparkling minarets of Stamboul; the English fleet, with the speed of alarm, shot up to the Dardanelles; and all Europe held its breath as expecting forthwith to see a fresh conflict, which Bismarck had once remarked would be as absurd and impossible as 'an encounter between an elephant and a whale.' The Bear actually had its paw on the coveted booty by the Golden Horn, but it was deterred from hugging its prey by the threatening attitude of the Lion; and it was in the midst of the excitement produced by this *tableau vivant* that the results of the war were embodied in the Treaty of San Stefano. In preparing this raw material, General Ignatieff had allowed a most ample margin for future trimming into shape, being well aware, as he was by this time, that Europe claimed to share with Russia the work of cutting into a final coat this diplomatic cloth of hers.

Acting as the mouthpiece, more than the mandatory of Europe, Bismarck had publicly proclaimed its expectation in this respect a few days before the signature of the San Stefano Treaty. One main cause of the excitement and suspense which then prevailed throughout Europe, but especially in England, was uncertainty as to how far the policy of Germany, now the admitted arbitress of the Continent, might not have been modified by the results of the war; and it was to dispel the disquieting effect of his long silence that Bismarck at last consented to reply to a question on the subject in the Imperial Parliament. It is not too much to say that the eyes of all Europe were, on that 19th of February, directed towards Berlin. No utterances of the Chancellor ever attracted so much attention abroad, where

they were looked forward to with the anxious impatience of a criminal awaiting his doom, or of wranglers assembled to hear the reading forth of an honour-list. Telegraphed *in extenso* to most European capitals, his speech was studied, conned, and commented on from every point of view; but its general effect was tranquillising, and its essence was conveyed in the famous avowal that, without abandoning the attitude of strict neutrality which he had hitherto observed, the Chancellor would now offer his services to the Powers as an 'honest broker,' or middleman, in the cause of peace.

Apart from the commercial freedom of the Dardanelles, and a humanitarian solicitude for the lot of the Christians in Turkey, Germany, he said, had no material interest in the Eastern Question, except, indeed, her interest in preventing the outbreak of a general quarrel over the distribution of the spoil, which Russia might provoke by replying to Europe with a '*beati possidentes!*' But he would not imitate the 'Napoleonic course of setting up as the schoolmaster, if not the arbiter of Europe.' All he aimed at was to play the peacemaker between dissentient Powers at the proposed Congress; and the only condition he attached to his acceptance of this proposal was that, if the Congress met on German soil, it must by courtesy have a German President. To this Congress, which had been initiated by Austria, invitations were finally issued on the 3rd June, and on the 13th of the same month there met at Berlin the representatives of the 'Powers who had signed the Treaties of 1856 and 1871, to discuss the preliminary Treaty of San Stefano between Russia and Turkey.'

The Congress sat exactly a month (13th June to 13th July), and these were golden days in the calendar of German history. Since the Congress of Vienna, there had been no such momentous gathering of statesmen; and the fact that they met in the German capital, under the presidency of the great Chancellor, was most flattering to the

vanity of the nation. At the Conference of Paris (1856), Prussia had only been admitted to a sort of ante-chamber seat; and now, after little more than twenty years, her Prime Minister figured as the directing spirit of a council, on the deliberations of which the fate of Europe hung. Never had transformation so important and complete been accomplished in so brief a space. As a Foreign Minister, Bismarck had reached the climax of his popularity at home and of his prestige abroad; but yet, as fate would have it, the inequality of his success between his domestic and his foreign policy was just at this time indicated by the painful fact, that the Plenipotentiaries of Europe arrived in Berlin to find the Emperor himself lying stricken by the buckshot pellets of a Socialist assassin.

His Majesty's condition cast a certain shadow over the Congress, but nevertheless the time was brilliant enough with its Court banquets, its ministerial receptions, its diplomatic dinners, its political conferences, and all the other incidents of the memorable occasion. The meeting of the three Emperors at Berlin (in the autumn of 1872) had been a dazzling enough event, but no immediate issues of peace and war depended on their deliberations; and the intercourse of the most powerful monarchs of the Continent did not excite half so much popular interest as the galaxy of European statesmen, of the first magnitude, which lent such a blinding lustre to the German firmament for a whole exciting summer month. With what intense interest the public of two hemispheres followed the proceedings of the Congress, was evidenced by the presence in Berlin of a crowd of newspaper correspondents from all parts of the world, who minutely conveyed to their readers all the incidents and external details of the momentous meeting: describing the arrangement of the horse-shoe table, in the Chancellor's own palace, at which the Plenipotentiaries sat, and telling how Bismarck comported himself in private to his various foreign guests; how, for example, he treated Lord Beacons-

field with especial distinction, and afterwards marked his admiration of the British Premier by admitting his portrait to share, with those of the Emperor and his own wife, the honour of being the sole artistic ornaments of his study; how, moreover, the Chancellor readily took a liking to French M. Waddington for his honest English qualities; how, on the other hand, he snubbed Mehemed Ali Pasha, though a German by birth, for his renegade character and his vulgar manners; how he respected the Marquis of Salisbury, and found a congenial colleague in the polished Count Schouvaloff; how he flattered the gaudy yet solid hussar-statesman, Count Andrassy; and how his attentions to Lord Beaconsfield were none the less sincere for their being doubtless meant at the same time to gall the jealous Prince Gortchakoff.

‘As for the Treaty of San Stefano,’ said Bismarck to General Grant, who visited Berlin about this time, ‘I think the whole situation might thus be summed up: Russia has swallowed more than she can digest, and the Congress must try to give her relief.’ In other words, the agreement between Russia and Turkey had to be harmonised with the general interests of Europe. That the Treaty of San Stefano had remodelled the map of Eastern Europe, to the detriment of these interests, was contended by all the Powers, and especially by Austria and England. Austria could not reconcile herself to the proposed new state of things in Bosnia, while the new Bulgaria of Russia’s creating was a stumbling-block to England, ‘as reducing Turkey to a level of absolute dependency upon the Power which has imposed this Treaty on her.’

But it was a hopeful sign that, when the Bulgarian question was under discussion, Prince Gortchakoff carefully absented himself from the sittings of the Congress—a sudden attack of political gout, aggravated by diplomatic indigestion due to the eating of strawberries, being his restraining ailment. ‘Russia,’ he said, on reappearing in the Radzi-



will Palace, 'Russia has brought hither laurels, and I hope that the Congress will convert them into olive-branches.' This process of transformation was facilitated by the energetic manner in which Lord Beaconsfield had acted on the maxim that 'if you want peace, you must prepare for war,' as evidenced by the summoning of Indian troops to Malta, the calling out of the reserves, and the voting of the six millions. But the secret Schouvaloff-Salisbury agreement, concluded before the meeting of the Congress, was proof that England had taken more than military precautions to insure its success.

And yet Prince Bismarck's task as 'honest broker' was difficult enough. In the Congress he had the twofold office of President and Plenipotentiary, and each of these functions had to be exercised in a different manner—with delicacy in the one case, and firmness in the other. Of this latter quality, the Turks, perhaps, had most frequent cause to experience the effect. Thus, when the Ottoman representatives flatly opposed the proposal of England, which had been warmly supported by Germany, that Austria should be entrusted with the administrative occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, they were sharply told by Bismarck that, unless they yielded on the point, they would have to submit to the Treaty of San Stefano pure and simple. But perhaps his activity as 'honest broker' was most conspicuously displayed in compounding the differences between England and Russia, which threatened to end in war. In spite of the Salisbury-Schouvaloff agreement, these two Powers could not come to terms about Bulgaria, and the British Premier ordered a special train to take him back to England. Hearing of this, Bismarck hastened, first to Beaconsfield, and then to Gortchakoff—the result of his mediation being an understanding between the two choleric old statesmen. But no sooner had the Bulgarian difficulty been settled than the question of Batoum threatened to imperil peace; and then Bismarck bethought him of how

he could incline the ear of the English nation to listen to the counsels of wisdom. Accordingly, he explained that the yieldingness of Russia had its limits; that she had already made most important concessions to England; and that if, instead of meeting Russia in the spirit of conciliation, she chose to go to war with Russia on account of Batoum, she would have to fight her battles alone. The Chancellor had the satisfaction of seeing that this advice was taken in the spirit it was given, and that England contented herself with Russia's promise to make of Batoum a free port.

These, then, were the chief incidents of the process by which Prince Gortchakoff's laurels — albeit considerably shorn of their original luxuriance — had been converted into olive-branches; by which also Lord Beaconsfield was enabled to return to London as the boastful bearer of 'peace with honour;' and by which the Treaty of San Stefano had been transformed into the Treaty of Berlin. That this un hoped-for result had been accomplished within a month — the Congress of Vienna had sat for six — was admittedly due to the tact, the energy, and the firmness with which the German Chancellor had acquitted himself of his functions as 'honest broker.' 'I have the firm hope,' he said in closing the Congress, 'that the European understanding will, with the help of God, be lasting, and that the cordial personal relations which during our labours have been established between us will strengthen and consolidate good relations between our Governments.'

This was a fine hope, but, alas! it was doomed to be incompletely realised. For it soon became painfully clear that the Congress of Berlin had anything but the effect of 'strengthening and consolidating the good relations' between Russia and Germany. Quite the contrary. Between the Treaty of Berlin and the Treaty of San Stefano there was a certain family resemblance, but it was faint. The latter instrument had been treated by the Powers, in the

opinion of Russia, like a captive who is sent back to his own camp by a barbarous enemy, with his nose and ears cut off. It was little wonder that Prince Gortchakoff described the 'Treaty of Berlin as the 'darkest page in all his official career,' and that he limped home under the influence of feelings which made Bottom say to Quince: 'I see their knavery, this is to make an ass of me.' The Russian Chancellor felt that his fame had been overshadowed by the greatness of the man whom he had patronisingly initiated in the art of diplomacy more than twenty years ago at Frankfort. 'Does Herr von Bismarck still call himself my pupil?' Prince Gortchakoff was wont to inquire on coming to Berlin. 'All I can say is, that if ever I was his teacher, it was only in the sense that Perugino was the master of Raphael.' This was the bitter truth. We saw how deeply mortified was Bismarck with the melodramatic way in which Gortchakoff had posed before a grateful Europe as the beneficent Cloud-Compeller, in the spring of 1875. The latter had taken credit to himself for allaying the 'war-scare' then; and now, in turn, he had to submit to the conditions on which the 'honest broker' had maintained the European peace. The two Chancellors were quits; and yet Prince Gortchakoff returned to St. Petersburg with a deep personal grudge against his colleague at Berlin.

Certainly the services of Russia to the national cause of Germany—in 1866 and 1870—entitled the former to look for a substantial return of the favours which she had repeatedly conferred on her Teutonic neighbour; but whether Germany absolved herself to the full of this debt of gratitude at the Congress of Berlin, is a question on which two sides must naturally be heard. We know what the Czar's Government thought on the subject, and we also know that to the political exasperation of Russia with the friend who, in her eyes, had betrayed her, there was added the personal rage of her Chancellor at deeming himself to

have been duped by the German rival of his fame and power. It was, then, from the combined operation of these two causes that the Czar fell away from the Triple Alliance, that the relations between St. Petersburg and Berlin became cooler and cooler, and that an actual conflict between Germany and Russia grew to be one of the grave and imminent dangers of the time.

With vigilant eye Bismarck had been watching all the signs of a coming storm ; and, deeming that it might soon burst, he made haste, as usual, to house his flock. That Russia had actually made formal offers of alliance to France was denied by M. Waddington ; but Cabinets in France come and go like the leaves of autumn, and Bismarck was well aware that a week or two only might suffice to elevate to power a Ministry wholly imbued with the revenge policy of M. Gambetta, and eager to grasp the proffered hand of Russian wooers. Germany would thus be exposed to simultaneous attack from two sides, and it was to obviate this serious danger that Bismarck hurried to Vienna. 'Do not compel me to choose between you and Austria,' he had said to Gortchakoff at the Congress, but the latter had spurned this counsel. The *Drei-Kaiser-Bund* had been exploded by the Russo-Turkish war, and a Dual Alliance must now take its place as the bulwark of European peace.

Bismarck hurried to Vienna, and he could not doubt that his advances would be well received. Austria, at any rate, had every reason to be grateful to Germany for the support she received from the latter Power at the Congress of Berlin ; and, indeed, she had already manifested her gratitude in a most substantial manner, by consenting to the abrogation of the famous fifth article of the Treaty of Prague. Referring to North Schleswig the article in question had long stood in Bismarck's way, and it was part of his settled policy to get rid of it. After twelve years of waiting his opportunity at last came, and a promise from Count Andrassy to abandon it was probably part of

the price stipulated for the support of Germany to the Eastern policy of Austria. At any rate, it was annulled by mutual agreement soon after the signature of the Treaty of Berlin ; and its abrogation was no less a reply to the anti-Prussian demonstrations of the Guelphs and Danes, than it was also a convincing proof that Austria had now at last buried the war-hatchet of 1866, and completed her reconciliation to new-born Germany.

It was under the firm assurance of this great fact that Bismarck, in the autumn of 1879, hastened to Vienna to repair the bulwark of European peace which had been breached by the breaking up of the *Drei-Kaiser-Bund*, and which was further threatened by the grave probability of a Franco-Russian compact. But his visit did not last long—only four days—during which Bismarck was frequently closeted with Francis Joseph, as well as with Count Andrassy and his successor-designate, Baron Haymerle ; and on the 26th September he was back again in Berlin. Nevertheless the hardest part of his task still remained, and that was to procure the Emperor's assent to the agreement of which he had brought the draft back with him from Vienna,—that Emperor who had himself shortly before gone to Alexandrovo on the Russian frontier, much against the advice of his Chancellor, with the view of giving explanations calculated to appease the Czar, and thus obviate the danger of a conflict between the two nations, which was growing more and more imminent. It cost him, indeed, a very hard struggle, including another threat to resign, to bend his Imperial master's purpose to his will ; but at last he succeeded, and on the 7th October, at Vienna, there was signed (by Prince Reuss, the German Ambassador, and Count Andrassy) a Defensive Treaty of Alliance between Germany and Austria, which provided—

‘Article I.—If, contrary to the hope and against the sincere wish of both the high contracting parties, one of the two Empires should be attacked by Russia, then the high contracting parties bind themselves

to assist each other with the entire military power of their Empires, and, accordingly, only to conclude peace by common agreement.

'Article II.—Should one of the high contracting parties be attacked by another Power' (i.e. other than Russia), 'then the other high contracting party hereby binds itself not only not to assist the assailant of its high ally, but also at least to observe an attitude of benevolent neutrality towards its high co-party. But if, nevertheless, in such an event the attacking Power should be supported by Russia, whether in the form of active co-operation or by military measures involving menace to the attacked, then the obligation of mutual assistance with full military power, stipulated for in Article I. of this treaty, shall in this case immediately come into force, and then, also, the military operations of both the high contracting parties shall be conducted in common, until they conclude a peace in common.'

It was only on 3rd February, 1888, when this defensive treaty was simultaneously published at Berlin and Vienna in order to clear up a situation which had become as perilous as it was perplexing, that the European public at large became aware of the exact nature of its scope and contents. But soon after its conclusion the general fact was purposely divulged by the Chancellor's semi-official print; for it concerned both contracting parties that Russia should thus get wind of what had been accomplished, and trim her sails accordingly. It was only gradually that the altered situation dawned on the German mind; but, after it had become quite clear, a loud chorus of praise and thanks arose from the nation; and even in England the Marquis of Salisbury hastened to acclaim the news 'as good tidings of great joy.' The Austro-German Alliance, which had thus been raised on the ruins of the *Drei-Kaiser-Bund*, was the great fact that now began to dominate the political dynamics of Europe. The Triple Alliance had been based on mere verbal assurances of mutual esteem and common interests; the understanding between Austria and Germany was reduced to writing. In the few days spent by Bismarck at Vienna, his long-cherished wish had at last been realised. As if by magic touch of wizard's wand he had changed the whole European situation, and the new tableau displayed

the two great Central Powers of Europe standing back to back—one of them looking towards France, and the other towards Russia, with ‘defence, not defiance’ written on their shields. This thrilling transformation-scene was a masterpiece of statecraft, and both by Austrians and Germans it was clapped to the echo.

But be it noted, for the fact is often overlooked, that this Austro-German Treaty is purely defensive, and not offensive as well, and does not provide for the contingency of an attack by either Germany or Austria on Russia—a fact which it is important to keep in mind when calculating the chances of Germany being involved in a war between the other two Empires, resulting from complications in the East. It is conceivable, for example, that Austria might have to take the field to resist Russian encroachments in the direction of Constantinople without a *casus fœderis* arising for Germany at all; and it is only forgetfulness of this consideration which has rendered it so difficult for political students to understand Bismarck’s attitude of indifference to the ‘free-hand’ policy of Austria as to Bulgaria and other Balkan questions.

Backed, as the conclusion of the new Alliance was on the part of Germany, by a plan for increasing her army (a plan carried out in the following year, 1880), the rumour of it soon acted in St. Petersburg like one of the Chancellor’s “cold-water jets.” It is true that some organs of the national Press grew more furious than ever, but they were straightway commanded by the Government, on pain of suspension, to observe greater moderation of tone in discussing international questions, especially the relations of the Empire to its neighbours. The barking dogs of Pan Slavism being thus whipped and whistled in to heel, while the military ardour of the nation found diverting vent in the work of conquering the Tekke-Turcomans, and in pushing the eastern boundaries of the Empire ever nearer the Anglo-Indian frontier, it only remained to re-establish the sem-

blance of those cordial relations between the Courts of St. Petersburg and Berlin which had been destroyed by recent events. Various circumstances tended to hasten this healing process; and when, in March 1881, the Czar Alexander II. fell a victim to those who had already made five different attempts to take his life, Prince Bismarck immediately took steps for combining the European Powers in common action against political crimes and international anarchy. We have already had occasion to refer to this endeavour, and to show that, one by one, the other Powers fell away and left Germany and Russia to concert their own measures on the basis of the original proposal, which ultimately (January 1885) found expression in the signature of an Extradition Agreement. But we may now remark that it was this community of action between the two Empires—isolated, as they were, on this subject from the rest of Europe—which acted as a salve to the wounds inflicted on Russia at the Congress of Berlin, and gradually reconciled her to the belief that the Austro-German Agreement would best answer its purpose by serving as a basis for the reconstruction of the Triple Alliance.

That the new Czar, Alexander III., shared this belief, seemed to be all the more a proof of his sagacity and self-restraint, seeing that, as heir-apparent, he had always been credited with a deep dislike to everything German, and that the Pan Slavists had looked forward to his reign as to the seventh heaven of their hopes. What, then, was their disappointment to see that Alexander III. had not been many months on the throne before he sought and obtained an interview with the German Emperor at Dantzic (September 1881). With the Emperor were the Crown Prince and Prince Bismarck; while the Czar was attended, among others, by M. de Giers, the successor-designate of Prince Gortchakoff, who had now virtually resigned the management of affairs. If any poor mortal ever inherited a crown of thorns, it was surely Alexander III.; and there is reason to



believe that, apart from the wish to make his peace with Germany, and thus dispose at least of one of his troubles, His Majesty more especially desired to take the advice of one of the wisest statesmen of the age on the domestic ills that might well have perturbed a more perspicacious and resolute soul than his. That it was the Czar's firm will to pursue a conservative and pacific policy could no longer be doubted, when next year (April 1882) he at last formally relieved Prince Gortchakoff from his cares of office, and also accepted the resignation of Count Ignatieff, who was the life and hope of the anti-German war-party. Great was the jubilation in Germany at the removal of these two statesmen from the council-chamber of the Czar, but not greater than the joy which greeted the Imperial frown incurred by General Skobelev on account of his anti-German speeches. Skobelev returned home from Paris as he was commanded, and soon thereafter all Europe was shocked to hear of his sudden death at Moscow.

The death of Skobelev had been shortly preceded by that of Garibaldi, as it was followed, before the year was fairly out, by the decease of Gambetta; while the following spring beheld Prince Gortchakoff pass away. And it was pointed out with unseemly exultation by German writers, that to only one of all these implacable foes of Germany—Garibaldi, to wit—was it given to die a worthy death. For, as the irony of fate would have it, the Teutophobe Skobelev succumbed to a riotous carnival of German courtesans; while Gortchakoff breathed his last (at Baden) in the arms of his German mistress; and Gambetta came by his end through the casual bullet of his paramour's revolver. But this mention of Gambetta reminds us that, having now traced the gradual restoration of cordial relations between the Governments (we will not say the peoples) of Germany and Russia as the almost inevitable effect of the Austro-German Alliance, we must now recur to the development of the Empire's relations to France.

While a Congress of Diplomacy had been promoting the cause of peace at Berlin, a Congress of Industry was no less contributing to the same end at Paris. Nor was it the fault of the French if the Germans hung back from grasping the palm-branch now held out to them by their vanquished foes. After some hesitation, it is true, they did send some few meagre works of painting and sculpture to the International Exhibition, (of 1878); but Bismarck would not hear of their taking part in the industrial competition at that great world-fair. The French Government pleaded hard, and even sent a special envoy, to urge its prayer; but the powers at Berlin were inexorable. It was pretended that, in thus refusing the earnest request of Marshal MacMahon, the Chancellor wished to revenge himself on the 'French hatred of Germany, which had displayed such formidable proportions (in the Press) in the year 1876-77;' but it is much more probable that the sagacious Prince wished to spare his countrymen—pending the salutary operation of his protective tariff—a repetition of the 'cheap and nasty' verdict which had been pronounced on their products at Philadelphia two years before; and that, suspecting an ambush on the part of the French palm-branch-bearers, he desired to save Germany from an 'industrial Sedan.'

But notwithstanding this slight jar in the harmony between Paris and Berlin, the concord between the two Governments continued to grow apace. For they were now allied with the other Powers in the pursuit of several common objects, and one of these objects was the strict execution of the Treaty of Berlin as this had to be enforced, among other things, by the naval demonstration at Dulcigno, and supervised by the delimitation of the Greek frontier which was taken in hand by another Conference at Berlin. But it is not too much to say that the force which did most to bend the will of the obstinate Sultan, in the matter of the new frontier, was the urgent advice of Bismarck, who by this

time had achieved an ascendancy in the councils of the Porte comparable only to the influence once exercised by the Great Eltchi on the Golden Horn. This ascendancy was denoted by the marked preference which the Sultan now began to show for German officials of all kinds as the reorganising instruments of his army, his administration, and his finances; and by the numbers of his own subjects whom he sent to Germany to be instructed in the arts of making a country great. But, above all things, the Sultan had now come to the firm conviction that, of all his so-called 'friends,' Germany was the most sincere and the most disinterested, seeing that, of all the Powers, she was the only one who had neither enriched, nor sought to enrich, herself with disintegrating slices of his dominions. Russia had wrung from him a portion of Armenia, Austria was in possession of Bosnia and Herzegovina, England had hoisted her standard on the island of Cyprus, Italy was casting longing eyes towards Tripolis, while in Tunis France was preparing to follow the example of all this land-grabbing.

But the wonder is that Bismarck should then have risked his enormous influence with the Sultan by encouraging France to appropriate Tunis. For encourage her—more or less directly—to do this, he certainly did. 'Do what you like with Tunis,' said Lord Salisbury to M. Waddington at the Congress of Berlin, 'England will raise no objections.' This was said with the view of consoling France for the acquisition of Cyprus by England, and from Berlin also M. Waddington carried away the conviction that Germany would in no way thwart the territorial ambition of France in Africa. For why should she? Was it not rather in the interest of Germany to conciliate her revengeful neighbour in every possible manner, to help restless France in finding a vent for her superfluous energies out of Europe, and to engage her in an enterprise that would divert her eyes from Cologne to Carthage? The integrity of the Turkish Empire was not a matter of indifference to Bismarck, but the

integrity of the German Empire was still dearer to him ; and if the occupation of Tunis by the French could in any degree tend to impede their recovery of Alsace-Lorraine, Bismarck was not the man—with all his disinterested friendship for the Sultan—to stand in the way of such a happy result. ‘We can only praise the behaviour of Germany in this important matter,’ wrote the French Foreign Minister, M. Barthélémy Saint-Hilaire (12th May), ‘and I gladly give expression to the gratitude we owe to the German Government, and to the leading organs of the German Press.’

These words indicated a marked advance on the path of *rapprochement* between the two countries, but Bismarck was well aware of the existence of a very large party in France who regarded his approaches with a ‘*timeo-Danaos-et-dona-ferentes*’ sort of feeling ; and of this party the chief was no less a person than the great tribune of the people, Léon Gambetta, the incorporation of all the national hopes of revenge. The career of this wonderful man had been followed in Germany with intense interest. Every word of his was weighed and commented on by the Press of Berlin with as much attention as is bestowed by the professors of the Fatherland on the exegesis of Virgil and of Plato. His speeches were studied, his actions were suspiciously watched, and the barometer of public feeling at Berlin rose and fell in proportion as Gambetta gave forth a peaceful or a war-like sign. Ever since the heroic days of Bordeaux, he had been steadily rising in the popularity of his countrymen ; and the Germans looked forward with apprehension to the time when that popularity should place him at the climax of national power. The Tunis incident had not long been over when it became evident that this time was fast approaching. But, with his usual foresight, Bismarck had provided for all contingencies.

It has been said that one of Bismarck’s main objects in encouraging the Republic to appropriate Tunis, apart from

his primary desire to divert its eyes from the Rhine to the ruins of Carthage, was to produce an estrangement between France and Italy. But if he aimed at the latter result, it could scarcely have been to the extent of provoking an open conflict between them, seeing that, in a war between the two Mediterranean rivals, Germany—as the Chancellor had written a year or two before—would be bound to support Italy; and Germany longed, not so much for an opportunity of attacking France, as for the means of completing her isolation, so as to render her innocuous on the Rhine. Thus Germany had an undoubted interest in the supervening of such a coolness between France and Italy as would induce the latter to court the sympathy of the German Powers; and this much at least may be said, that whatever Bismarck's share in producing this result, it had now been fairly brought about.

By visiting Vienna, in the autumn of 1881, King Humbert had virtually knocked at the door of the Austro-German Alliance. Yet his pilgrimage to the Hofburg was far from meeting with the unanimous approval of his subjects, of whom a large section—the Irredentists—still clung to the hope of rounding off the national unity with the Italian-speaking districts of Austria. Republican demonstrations of dissatisfaction greeted the King on his return to Rome, and it was probably this outburst of feeling which caused Bismarck, a few days later, to declare that ‘with each successive Ministry in Italy, the centre of political gravity had changed so much from right to left, that it could slide no further in the latter direction without falling on republican ground.’ These words being made the subject of comment in the Italian Chamber, Signor Mancini (Foreign Minister) observed that they had nothing to do with the German Chancellor's attachment to Italy, being merely the ‘outcome of an oratorical promenade through the chief nations of Europe with the view of showing that liberalism everywhere was nothing but masked republicanism.’ Hereupon

Bismarck telegraphed to Mancini to thank him for this correct interpretation of his speech, and to assure him of his friendliness to Italy. 'The Italians,' said Mancini, 'should unite to sympathise with Germany, as well as to trust and esteem the high wisdom and magnanimity of the great statesman at the head of the Imperial Government.' This effusive exchange of compliments was a significant hint to Gambetta, who had begun to angle in the republican backwaters of the Peninsula, as it was a proof that Bismarck's policy of isolating France had been crowned with a fresh success.

The understanding between Italy and the German Powers had, indeed, by this time attained to something like the consistency of a new Triple Alliance, though it was only in the spring of the following year (1883) that the fact was authoritatively disclosed to Europe by Signor Mancini himself. This new Triple Agreement was rightly interpreted as tantamount to a tacit demand by the three contracting Powers that France should enter into her own recognisances to keep the peace; an implied request which was, of course, followed by an indignant profession of injured innocence on the part of France. The incident had the effect of reopening for a while the fountains of abuse that periodically flowed from Paris to Berlin. For the advocates of revenge now found themselves further removed than ever from the realisation of their aims, while other patriots deplored the growing state of isolation to which their country was reduced. The climax of this isolation, as far as Italy was concerned, had been betokened by the new Triple Alliance; and this understanding, in turn, was ratified on the part of Germany by a visit which the Crown Prince, acting on the Chancellor's advice, made to Rome towards the end of the following year, when he was treated by King Humbert and his subjects with every mark of honour and respect.

To Rome the German Crown Prince had gone straight from Madrid, where he was likewise a highly-honoured

guest of King Alphonso ; and this leads us to speak of another link in the chain of isolation with which Bismarck was slowly, but surely, engirdling the French Republic. The Spanish people had not forgotten the incident of the Hohenzollern candidature, and what Germany had to suffer on that account ; and they were still grateful for Bismarck's friendly intervention on their behalf, when their country, a few years later, was rent with civil war. After repressing the republican rising in his monarchy (in 1883), King Alphonso had visited the Courts of Vienna and Berlin, with the view of conveying his personal thanks for the congratulations that had been sent him from these capitals, and by the German Emperor in particular he was loaded with honours. But there was one thing, above all others, that sorely tried the patience of the French. The German Emperor had given King Alphonso the command of a cavalry regiment. Now this, in itself, was nothing but an observance of the graceful custom of hospitality which had invariably made His Majesty confer a like honour on similar guests ; but when the French reflected that the colonelcy bestowed on King Alphonso was that of a Uhlan regiment which had especially distinguished itself in France, and which was now actually garrisoned at Strasburg, the capital of one of their conquered provinces, they impulsively rushed to the conclusion that they had once more—as, alas, how often already!—been made the objects of one of 'M. de Bismarck's' studied and gratuitous insults. As a matter of fact, the Chancellor had nothing whatever to do with the selection of the Strasburg regiment, the Emperor's choice of it being mainly determined by the predilection of King Alphonso himself for a uniform which had yellow facings, and would thus suit his sallow complexion. But the French populace paused not to discriminate between a possible want of tact and a wilful provocation ; and therefore, when he passed through Paris on his return to Madrid, the 'Roi Ulan' was received with howls of execration, which

were partly directed against himself, and partly against the author of his German honours.

The consequence of this incident was that all Spain, which had previously been somewhat divided in her allegiance and in her neighbourly affections, now rallied round her King, and threw herself into the arms of Germany. From the frontier to Madrid the King's journey was a triumphal progress, and in his swarming and illuminated capital he was hailed with frantic shouts of 'Long live the Uhlan colonel! Long live Germany!' Intense was the indignation with France throughout all Spain, and equally intense was the sympathy with Spain throughout all Germany. The two nations had suffered a common insult, and been knit together by an additional bond of common interest. The Chancellor's policy of isolating France from Spain had succeeded beyond his expectations and his calculations. But the incident did not end here. For King Alphonso had barely been a month at home when it was announced that the German Crown Prince, on behalf of his father, would shortly start for Madrid to return the visit of His Spanish Majesty. The Emperor William had only returned the visit of Victor Emmanuel after the lapse of about two years, but his similar debt to the King of Spain was vicariously absolved within the space of two months.

As to the meaning of this precipitate compliance with the rules of etiquette, there could be no possible doubt. It was intended to show the Spanish King and people how highly their friendship was prized by Germany, and how deeply her Emperor resented the insult to which an innocent action of his had exposed his royal guest. For the French, too, the prompt return visit had its instructive aspects; and perhaps the most significant of all these was the fact that the Crown Prince did not pass through France on his way to Spain, but travelled to Genoa, whence he was conveyed by a German squadron across the Mediterranean to Valencia. And from the date of his



arrival at Valencia, to the day of his re-embarkation at Barcelona, he received a welcome everywhere like that which greeted the re-crowned and re-patriated Charles II. in his progress from Dover to London. Spanish inventiveness exhausted itself in devising means of honouring the Imperial guest of the nation; and when at last the Crown Prince left, he carried with him the conviction that his visit to Spain had most successfully completed the policy begun at Homburg, and that Prince Bismarck's scheme of assuring the peace of Europe by drawing all the minor Powers within the defensive circle of the Austro-German alliance had been crowned with another signal triumph. Self-interest, as well as the irresistible laws of political gravity, had grouped all the continental Powers—save France and Russia—in more or less immediate proximity around the two central States of Europe; and even Russia now began to feel the disadvantage of her isolation, and to betray distinct signs of a wish to rally to her old allies.

It is true that no slight sensation was caused in Germany when the Czar's most peaceful assurances, on the occasion of his coronation at Moscow (in May, 1883), were followed by his casual meeting at Copenhagen (September) with the English statesman who was perhaps more of a bugbear to the apprehensive Germans than ever Prince Gortchakoff had been. Indeed, the sudden appearance of Mr. Gladstone at the side of the Czar in Copenhagen filled the German Press with something like the panic once inspired by the ghost of Hamlet's father in the castle sentinels at Elsinore. The public writers of Berlin at once clutched up their partisans; but, the English apparition being so majestic, Bismarck would not have them offer it the show of violence. 'Fear not,' the Chancellor was reported to have said; 'Gladstone is a man of cool blood and sound understanding, and I am convinced that he has exhibited both these qualities even in the highly dangerous atmosphere of Hamlet.'

The distribution of the Russian army on the western

frontier was still far from reassuring to the General Staff at Berlin. But if this was still a source of disquietude to the German Government, it was soon thereafter removed by the gradual retirement of the threatening masses of Russian cavalry more towards the interior, as well as by the altered tone of the Moscow Press, which now declared that 'a war between Russia and Germany would be the most absurd of all absurdities.' It was about this time, too, that M. de Giers made his second pilgrimage of peace to Berlin and Friedrichsruh (November, 1883); and when, shortly afterwards, a Russian squadron, by special command of the Czar, repaired to Genoa to salute the German ironclads that were to convey the Crown Prince first to Spain, and thence back to Italy; when Prince Orloff, a *persona gratissima* to Prince Bismarck, was transferred from the Russian Embassy at Paris to Berlin; and when, above all things, a Russian gold-loan was brought out at Berlin, under the direct auspices of the Prussian Government,—and subscribed for more than ten times over (April, 1884),—there could no longer be any doubt that Russia had at last honestly resolved to walk with her immediate neighbours in the paths of peace.

Austria had latterly acted as a sort of lightning conductor to the surcharged atmosphere of journalistic Russia—to such an extent, indeed, that Count Kalnoky had even seen fit to allay the apprehensions of his countrymen by assuring them that, 'in the event of being attacked by Russia, Austria would not stand alone.' But there was nothing, he added, in the attitude of the Czar's Government itself to render this contingency even remotely probable. For that result Austria certainly had to thank the German Chancellor, who had thus gradually imposed his pacific will on all European diplomacy, and gathered the nations of the Continent into a Peace League to which it was discreditable, and even dangerous, not to belong. Those who had hitherto believed the secret of the Chancellor's character to be a propensity to intrigue, and to pursue the interests of his country on the

path of war, were now confounded by the undeniable fact that, with every opportunity of provoking quarrels, he had nevertheless been the peace-maker and the peace-keeper of Europe for a period of fourteen years. By what masterly combinations, and by what moderate exercise of his vast power, this grand result was achieved, we have endeavoured to trace. We have seen how Bismarck, according to the needs of the hour, combined the Powers of Europe to serve the purposes of his foreign policy with the same successful adroitness as has rarely failed him in creating a favourable majority out of the heterogeneous parties of the German Parliament. We have shown how the Triple Alliance, as the bulwark of European peace, was broken up by the Russo-Turkish war and succeeded by the Austro-German League, which grew by the adhesion of several other States to such imposing dimensions that even reluctant Russia at last began to yield to its attractive force; and now the next turn of the European kaleidoscope—always in the hands of Bismarck—shows us the three Emperors, accompanied by their respective Chancellors, again embracing in effusive friendship at the little Polish town of Skierniewice, in the autumn of 1884.

While men were wondering what had been done at Skierniewice in addition to the exchanging of peaceful assurances, and the discussion of measures against international anarchy; and while Englishmen, in particular, were pondering on the return of Russia to her old love, as well as on the increased freedom of action she might thus acquire in the East,—their attention was suddenly arrested by the revelation that more than a mere *rapprochement* had been effected between France and Germany; that, indeed, the Governments of these two States had to this extent, at least, entered into an alliance, that they had agreed to pursue a common policy with respect to certain portions of Africa in which England had a transcendent interest, to wit, the countries watered by the Congo, the Niger, and the Nile.

Ever since the death of Gambetta, the relations of the Republic to the Empire had been steadily improving. Bismarck himself had never lost an opportunity of showing his loyalty, his good faith, and his good will to the Government of M. Grévy ; while the latter, on the other hand, had been persistent in his efforts to evince his pacific and treaty-abiding sentiments towards Germany. It is true that incidents occurred to provoke occasional bickerings and heart-burnings in the Press of the two countries—incidents like the seditious outbursts of Metz deputies, the tearing down of a German flag from a Paris hôtel, the insult to the ‘Uhlan King,’ the annual demonstration by the Alsatians in Paris in front of the statue of Strasburg, the appointment as French War Minister of a General (Thibaudin) who had broken his parole to his German captors. But none of these incidents had any serious effect on the relations of the two Governments, and, in the summer of 1884, Bismarck declared that ‘our relations to France are now as friendly and trustful as with any other State in Europe.’ The Chancellor himself had even become popular with a certain class in France—especially with the anti-English element ; and not slight, therefore, was the joy of this party at learning that, shortly before the meeting at Skierniewice, the French Ambassador (Baron de Courcel) had gone to Varzin, and there established ‘perfect identity of views’ between the two Governments as to certain questions of trade and territory on the West Coast of Africa, on the strength of which Germany invited the Powers to a Conference at Berlin.<sup>1</sup>

The obstruction which his new colonial policy was believed by the Chancellor to encounter on the part of

<sup>1</sup> The programme of deliberations was : Freedom of commerce in the Congo territory ; application of the stipulations of the Vienna Congress, as respects freedom of river navigation to the Congo and Niger ; and determination of the formalities under which new annexations on the coast of Africa are to be considered effective.

England had annoyed and incensed him to such a degree that he had already threatened to throw himself into the arms of France, and to seek in Paris those practical proofs of friendship which he could no longer find in London ; and it was in accordance with this threat that he had refused to recognise the so-called Congo Treaty between England and Portugal, as well as sprung upon Lord Granville the idea of this West African Conference with all the shock of a complete surprise. In similar circumstances Lord Palmerston would have been swift to return to the Franco-German invitation the answer which it deserved. But the honour and dignity of England were now in the keeping of men of very different character from either Lord Palmerston or Lord Beaconsfield—men whose only excuse for thus consenting to take their humble cue from Berlin was that the objects of the Conference itself were dear to England, and that the securing of the substance was well worth a sacrifice in point of form. But in this case, indeed, the form itself was as important, if not more so, than the substance.

For England had hitherto figured as the philanthropic and enlightened champion of all liberal principles, of free-trade, and of human freedom ; and her prestige throughout the extra-European world, among the civilised and the barbarous, the bond and the free, was broadly and firmly based on belief in her power and her will to bring home the greatest blessings of peace to the human race. But now, of a sudden, the initiative in all these things seemed to have passed from the Mistress of the Seas to the Master of the Continent. London had hitherto been the centre where the sun of civilisation shone brightest, but now the luminary appeared to send forth its rays from Berlin. If there is anything certain, it is that the Conference, which disposed of the fate of an immense portion of the Dark Continent, ought by natural right to have sat in London, and not in Berlin. But Germany, seizing her opportunity,

hastened to anticipate England in picking up the game which the latter had already winged. Hurrying up, like another Blücher, to the field of battle towards the close of day, Bismarck helped the English to win what they had long been fighting for, and had, indeed, already all but won ; and, placing himself at the head of the allied forces, he led them on to victory. But though the English had done all the hard, effective fighting, the Germans and the French, arrogated to themselves priority of place in the triumphal entry into possession ; and it was by this remissness, it was by thus allowing herself to be so easily baulked of her just position of light and leading in this matter of honour and etiquette, that England could not avoid the appearance of having been somewhat shorn of her prestige by the German Chancellor.

Shorn of her prestige, perhaps, but not of her power. For from the West African Conference, which was opened and closed, but otherwise not attended by Prince Bismarck himself, and which sat for the better part of four weary months (November, 1884, till February, 1885), England emerged rather the gainer than otherwise in positive results. Germany had won all the honours, but England had got most of the tricks. She had practically secured the ends for which she negotiated the Congo Treaty with Portugal. She had obtained the recognition of her own commercial principles by all the maritime Powers of Europe and the United States over an immense expanse of Africa ; she had procured the assent of those Powers to a declaration against the slave-trade ; she had also induced them to accept her reading of the rules of future annexation in Africa, and she had established her own right to exclusive influence on the Lower Niger.

It was not without a keen sense of the incongruous that the hard-headed Englishmen, who were sent to look after the interests of their country at Berlin, beheld the Protectionist Powers displaying such a mighty zeal for the applica-

tion of those principles of trade in Africa which they all found to be so terribly detrimental to their own prosperity in Europe; and it was with blended feelings of humour, despair, and ridicule, that, week after week, and month after month, they watched the piling up of such a huge and factitious-looking structure of international law as that which was finally called the General Act of the West African Conference. Still, if it pleased Prince Bismarck to be the controlling architect of this edifice, they had no objection to join their colleagues in carrying stones to it, especially as they had everything to gain by its stability—if stable it could prove.

Thus we have seen how the German Chancellor trenched upon the field of England's prestige by taking the initiative in the matter of the West African Conference, and how, by acting as chief obstetric physician to the Congo State, he had come to exercise his determining influence in a region which had hitherto been much more within the sphere of English than of German policy. But there was still another region in this same continent of Africa where the Chancellor had been gradually endeavouring to make his power felt—a country in which English interests were paramount, and that was Egypt. Here again, too, as in the case of West Africa, this manifestation of Germany's power was the result of a tacit agreement with, as it was more directly to the advantage of, France. Yet it had not always been so. There was a time when Bismarck was willing to do almost more for English policy in Egypt than support it with his benevolent neutrality; but the causes which induced him to repudiate the Congo Treaty, and to invite the Powers to a Conference at Berlin in close pre-concert with France—these and other reasons had operated to convert this attitude of benevolent neutrality into one of something like active hostility against England, and practical sympathy with France.

Having been the well-wisher and the helper of England in Egypt thus far, Prince Bismarck, in common with the

rest of Europe, naturally cast his straining eyes towards the land of the Pharaohs, to see how the Gladstone Ministry should turn to account the blood that had been spilt at Tel-el-Kebir. But neither the German Chancellor nor his countrymen could discern the smallest indication that the Gladstone Cabinet had a will or a plan of its own; and of this lamentable truth the most convincing evidence was the fact that the rulers of the British Empire were for ever pestering the arbiter of Europe with requests for 'advice or hints' as to what they should do with Egypt. It was at once a proof, thought the Germans, of the height of power to which Prince Bismarck had risen, and of the depth of doubt and impotence to which the Gladstone Government had sunk, that the latter frequently appealed for counsel and directions to Berlin. 'In each case,' said the Chancellor, 'the inquiry was whether I was prepared to give the English Government "any advice or hint" as to what it might do in Egypt, and which would at the same time meet with our approval.' It is little wonder that this revelation of British subserviency to the Chancellor's will and judgment—which was only one degree less shameful than the dependence of certain seventeenth century British statesmen on the gold of France—was received in the German Parliament with peals of cheers and derisive laughter; and that, therefore, many patriotic Englishmen felt inclined to vent the sense of their humiliation in the words with which Earl Cairns expressed the feelings of the nation, when the keepers of England's honour were held to have struck their flag before a paltry pack of semi-barbarous Boers:

'In all the ills we ever bore,  
We grieved, we sighed, we wept; we never blushed before.'

Instead of seeing Egypt profit by the exercise of English influence, under the authority of the Sultan, Bismarck beheld the interests of that country gradually falling a prey to the vacillation, the cowardice, the rashness, and the folly



of the most disastrous Government that ever played fast and loose with the destinies of a great Empire. Well may the Chancellor have exclaimed, that if, in the whole course of his life, he had inflicted upon Germany half the ignominy and weakness which Mr. Gladstone had imposed on England in the course of four years, he never would have had the courage to look his countrymen in the face again. The Chancellor's standpoint, naturally, was not whether an alliance with France or with Germany would be more advantageous to England, but whether a cordial understanding with England or with France would be the more beneficial to Germany; and all his efforts to complete the isolation of the Republic, by rallying England to the Central European flag, had hitherto been vain. The more he tried to promote British policy in Egypt, the more he beheld England striking the attitude of a spurned yet persistent wooer of France; nor could the affronts she received in Madagascar, nor the repudiation of her Commercial Treaty, nor the native storm of ridicule and indignation which swept away that self-sacrificial Suez Canal Agreement with the 'sagacious M. de Lesseps'—could any of these rebuffs turn the English Government from its infatuated love of its obstinate rival in Egypt.

Accordingly, there came a time when Germany made no secret of her desire to give her moral support to France in Egypt rather than to England. For this change of attitude on the part of Bismarck there were various reasons, unconnected with Egypt, which we shall presently have to consider; but the Chancellor was by no means pleased with the manner in which England had exercised her stewardship in Egypt itself; and, in particular, it was believed in Germany that, by the use of ordinary quarantine precautions, the British authorities might easily have warded off from Egypt that serious visitation of the Asiatic cholera which threatened to extend to all Europe. This was a matter in which the Chancellor now distinctly sought

to impose his will on haughty England, but with a want of success which only embittered him all the more against the Government that resisted him. Twice in the London Conference on Egyptian finance did Count Münster rise to propose a discussion of the sanitary question, and twice—though supported by his colleagues—was his motion curtly overruled by Lord Granville, as beyond the prearranged scope of their deliberations. A similar fate met M. Waddington's proposal for the settlement of the indemnities due to the sufferers by the bombardment of Alexandria; and then, suddenly 'rising from his seat,' Lord Granville abruptly terminated a conference which was the first clear expression of the fact that England now found herself opposed by a moral coalition of the continental Powers. By some, Lord Granville's conduct was described as dignified, while by others it was characterised as insulting; and to the latter category belonged the Governments, especially that of Germany, which had been invited to take part in a confabulation foredoomed to failure. But in any case, Bismarck felt deeply slighted by the abrupt dismissal of the Egyptian Conference, and he now began to make more ostentatious assertion of his preference for a friendly understanding and co-operation with France. We have now shown how—by the pursuit of a common policy with France in the countries watered by the Congo, the Niger, and the Nile—Bismarck had carried out his threat that, unless England proved more complaisant to Germany in a certain new field of her ambition, 'Germany would seek from France the assistance which she had failed to obtain from England, and would draw closer to her on the same lines on which she now endeavoured to meet England;' and now we must say something about that new field of German ambition.

Of all the great maritime States of Europe, Germany was the only one that had no possessions beyond the sea. Though prolific of children, she had never become a fruitful mother of peoples. England had both colonies and

colonists; France had colonies, but no colonists; while poor Germany had plenty of the best colonists in the world, but no colonies to receive them. The stream of emigration from Germany grew to be greater than from any other European country, but Teutonic emigrants became as completely lost to their Fatherland as those of its sons who fattened the battlefields of Bohemia and of France. Like the overflowing Nile, Germany sent forth an annual flood of emigrants, fertilising the countries where it ran; but, in return for this service to the general cause of civilisation, no counter-current of wealth or resources, from communities that were ruled by her laws and devoted to her interests, set for her receptive shores. But, in proportion as their naval power increased, there grew in the German people a desire for some transmarine field where that power might be exercised. All the ownerless lands of the earth were being rapidly appropriated, and in Germany those voices multiplied which urged the Government to join in the general scramble for territory before it was too late. Societies for promoting colonisation began to be founded, publications on the necessity of inaugurating a colonial policy poured from the Press, and there were other signs of a growing wish on the part of the nation to provide some outlets of its own for the enormous current of emigration which flowed like another Gulf Stream westward across the Atlantic, and otherwise inundated most countries even of the Old World.

About the time of the Empire's birth Prince Bismarck had held that, 'for us in Germany, this colonial business would be just like the silk and sables in the noble families of Poland, who have no shirts to their backs.' But half-a-dozen years had not elapsed before his ideas on this head had undergone a marked change. And when at last the traces of the colonial movement in the nation began to grow deeper and deeper, the Chancellor resolved to test its extent and force. An opportunity for this purpose pre-

sented itself in the spring of 1880, when the failure of the Hamburg house of Godeffroy, popularly known as the 'South Sea Kings,' threatened to end in the extinction of all German trade and influence, which were admittedly paramount, in Polynesia. The Godeffroys had cherished the scheme of peopling their enormous tracts of land in Samoa with German emigrants. Bismarck had even given practical support to their plan and promised more, but the war of 1870 intervened to upset their calculations, and in ten years afterwards they were bankrupt. A South Sea Company tried to raise itself on the ruins of their enterprise, and it was to enable this company to be the national bulwark of German interests in Polynesia that the Chancellor asked the Reichstag to guarantee payment of its dividends by a maximum annual grant of 300,000 marks for a period of twenty years. By a narrow majority his demand was refused; but four years later (in 1884) he announced in Parliament that Germany was now at last about to become a Colonial Power. Not, it was true, in the style of England, France, and other countries. There would be no State colonisation; but wherever, in the wide world, German subjects acquired ownerless land, the ægis of the Empire would be thrown around them. The Imperial flag would not precede private colonial enterprise in distant lands, but it would always follow it; and hitherto unprotected, or badly protected, Germans abroad would now be familiarised with the proud feeling of '*Civis Romanus sum*.'

Such, in brief, was the character of the colonial policy on which, 'after long thinking and beginning late,' Prince Bismarck had now resolved to embark, and which he enunciated for the first time in connection with the debates on the Line of Steamer Subsidy Bill. His declarations were the most momentous to which Parliament had been treated for a long time, and by the mass of the nation they were received with general applause. But the spirit of the country was ill-reflected in the Reichstag, where factious

partisanship still usurped the place of patriotism, and the Steamer Subsidy Bill was rejected by the Radical Opposition for pretty much the same reasons as had led it to quash the Samoa Scheme. The Chancellor himself had said that, if this new measure were rejected, he certainly would feel discouraged in the matter of his colonial policy 'of the moderate and unadventurous kind which had been advocated with such apparent enthusiasm by the nation at large;' but it soon transpired that he had already advanced too far on the path of this policy to be able to recede.

In the Chancellor's eyes, the opposition of the German Radicals to his Mail Steamer Measure was nothing compared with the much more serious obstruction which England, as he imagined, had jealously determined to offer to his general colonial policy; and he resolved to conciliate his domestic foes by showing to what extent he had been thwarted by the foreigner. Hitherto, in questions as between Germany and other countries, he had never failed in rallying all parties around him, and in making them present a united front to the meddling or the menacing alien. But it was necessary to show these parties to what extent his colonial policy, in his opinion, had been obstructed by England; and for this purpose, therefore, the reintroduction of the Steamer Subsidy Bill next session (winter of 1884-85) was heralded by the issue of a series of White Books, which told the nation a wonderful tale of how Germany began her career as a colonising Power.

Wonderful was the tale, but one-sided; for the story was not complete until the Chancellor's Sibylline leaves had provoked a similar fit of apocalyptic fury on the part of the British Government; and it was only after the dust and smoke of the Battle of the White and the Blue Books had passed away, that it was possible to see clearly what the embittered combatants had been fighting for, and to pronounce upon the question of right or wrong. That the Gladstone-Granville-Derby Government had, in some

respects, pursued a dog-in-the-manger policy with respect to certain territories where Germany desired to hoist her flag, could be doubted by no one who read with mortification how Lord Granville ultimately hastened to recognise that German annexation of Angra Pequena against which he had protested as 'an encroachment on our legitimate rights,' as well as to crave protection for British subjects from the German Government in that territory in which Germany had at first, but vainly, craved the friendly protection of England for her trading sons. In fact, the attitude of the British Government to this new colonial policy of Germany was well characterised by the following skit:—Prince Bismarck: 'We have helped you in Egypt, why not oblige us in Fiji and elsewhere?' Lord Derby: 'We can't do it.' Lord Granville: 'We won't do it.' Prince Bismarck: 'But you *must* do it.' Lord Granville: 'Very well, we will then.' The German Chancellor knew his own mind while the English Cabinet did not; and when at last the latter woke up to consciousness of the fact that Bismarck was in earnest and determined to have his own way, it had no choice left but to convert its policy of obstruction and procrastination into one of concession and surrender.

What embittered Bismarck most of all, was not so much the mere fact that he had been compelled to wait for a long time before getting definite answers to his inquiries from the British Government, as his belief that it had utilised this interval in 'devising competitive schemes of English annexation' in various parts of Africa. The German people, too, had become profoundly convinced that their aspirations were viewed in England with jealousy and ill-will, and the publication of the White Books only tended to strengthen this belief. But the truth was that the Chancellor's sudden embracement of a colonial policy had filled the British Government less with malevolence than with surprise—to a degree, indeed, which engendered the inaction of incredulity. 'That England,' said the Chancellor himself,

'in her consciousness that "Britannia rules the waves," looks on in some surprise when we, her landlubberly cousins, suddenly take to the water too, is not to be wondered at.' 'The English,' he remarked on another occasion, 'seem to think that *Quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi*, and that we are the *bos*.' But this was not precisely what the English people thought. If the German 'Ox' chose to cross the water, they had no objection whatever to its doing so, provided it did not seek to graze in pastures where their own interests were supreme. But it was some considerable time before their Government could really become convinced that Germany was thoroughly in earnest with her colonial schemes, and from its uncertainty resulted that appearance of dilatoriness and disobligingness on its part which gave the Chancellor so much offence.

In speeches and despatches he continued to hurl the bitterest reproaches against England for thwarting him in his colonial policy, and to threaten to join her foes unless she proved more compliant with his imperious will. 'We must not,' he wrote, 'allow the idea to arise that we are capable of sacrificing the vital interests of Germany to our real and sincere desire for a good understanding with England.' He broke out anew into his old lament that the British Government was thwarting his colonial policy of set and malevolent purpose, that it was annoying him at every point, that wherever Germany hoisted her flag over a beggarly little settlement (or 'barren sand-hole,' as *Angra Pequena* had been called in the Reichstag), England immediately applied her 'closing-up system,' depriving it of necessary light, and air, and elbow-room. It was thus, he said, that she had tried to choke the life out of *Angra Pequena*, to tight-lace the Cameroons, to monopolise New Guinea, and to constitute herself sole mistress of South-East Africa.

All these things, the Chancellor seemed to think, were done against him from a sheer spirit of ugly jealousy and insatiable land-greed, and not in the necessary interest

of the British Empire. It never seemed to occur to him that, apart from the prior and prescriptive title of England to certain waste places of the earth, the time had now come when it was her highest interest—her true foreign policy—to cultivate closer and more cordial relations with her own offspring, with her own Colonial States, than with the Powers of the Continent; and that, if she allowed Germany to have it all her own way with her schemes in South Africa and in New Guinea, she would be sure to estrange the affections of her own Colonies in those parts of the world, and perhaps even produce in them more than a mere longing for secession. That this is no purely fanciful consideration, was proved by the storm of indignation and protest which swept over Australia, especially Queensland, when it became known that Germany had annexed the north coast of New Guinea, after the bold appropriation of all the non-Dutch portion of the Papuan Island by the Queensland Government had been timidly repudiated by Lord Derby. But, from his particular point of view, the Chancellor claimed as much respect for the public opinion of Germany as of Australia; he denied the right of the Australians to apply the Monroe doctrine to their Polynesian neighbourhood; and thus it was that he came to denounce the due regard of England for the cohesion of her great Empire as wanton obstruction to the colonial expansion of Germany.

But, indeed, the German White Books had told such an imperfect and one-sided story, that the English Government could not possibly, without renouncing all the laws of honest self-defence, have refrained from publishing counter-statements, even though, in the eyes of Bismarck, these ‘constituted such an act of indiscretion as must render confidential intercourse between the statesmen of the two countries impossible in the future.’ The Chancellor, in particular, was highly incensed at the divulgence of his threat to throw himself into the arms of France in the



event of his colonial advances being rejected by England, seeing that this might have the effect—the intended effect, he feared—of making his artificial ally, France, distrustful of a lover plainly obtainable by the highest bidder. And it was under the sense of this irritation that he fought his famous oratorical duel with Lord Granville, of which the rapier-sparks shed so much light on the Egyptian policy of Germany. ‘If my advice,’ he said, ‘with respect to Egypt had been followed by England, many a complication, perhaps, would not have occurred.’ That the Chancellor said this under a keen sense of irritation, and a feeling that he had been the object of a personal attack on the part of Lord Granville, was proved by the angry manner in which he girded at the English Government, its rudeness, its unpardonable indiscreetness, its malice, and its abominably long-winded methods of doing business. But before the echo of this explosion had subsided, it became known that the Chancellor had sent his son, Count Herbert, on a special olive-bearing mission to London, with the object of giving and receiving such explanations as would end in peace.

The period of misunderstanding had lasted long enough ; it was now time that two nations, which had every motive of interest and origin to be good friends, should end their lovers’ quarrel. This mission drew from Lord Granville, in the House of Lords, the loudly-cheered assurance, ‘that all my efforts will be exerted in favour of the conciliatory policy which has been sketched out by the German Chancellor,’ as well as from Mr. Gladstone, in the House of Commons, the equally applauded utterance :

‘If Germany is to become a colonising Power, all I say is, God speed her. She becomes our ally and partner in the execution of the great purposes of Providence for the advantage of mankind. I hail her in entering upon that course, and glad will I be to find her associating with us in carrying the light of civilisation, and the blessings that depend upon it, to the more backward and less significant regions of the world.’

Nor was it long before the beneficent association of the two nations thus referred to by Mr. Gladstone was practically exemplified in the anti-slavery blockade of the East African Coast, as well as in friendly conferences and negotiations for the delimitation of their respective territories and 'spheres of interest' throughout the Dark Continent,—negotiations that culminated, after Prince Bismarck had left office, in the Anglo-German Agreement, which, among other things, restored the island of Zanzibar to England, and the island of Heligoland to Germany. And it was gratifying to find, after the prolonged and acrimonious lovers' quarrel between the two countries about their colonial rights and wrongs, that when Major von Wissmann was sent out to suppress an insurrection in East Africa, resulting from the inexperience and unwisdom of its new German masters, Bismarck enjoined upon him the paramount necessity of doing all he could to conciliate the good-will of England.

But, bitter as had been his dispute with England, it was never half so dangerous as his contention with Spain concerning the Caroline Islands, which threatened at one time to end in actual war, and which was only composed by being referred for arbitration to the Pope. Of all the acts which had gained for the Chancellor a reputation for astuteness, this was, perhaps, the most politic and masterly, in view of all the circumstances of the Hispano-German quarrel, as well as of the then condition of the 'Kulturkampf,' or ecclesiastical war between Berlin and Rome. But if the way in which he extricated himself from his quarrel with Spain betokened sagacity of the highest order, it must, at the same time, be allowed that he had never acted with more unscrupulousness than when he calmly disavowed and sacrificed his consular agent at Samoa in order to save Germany from the consequences of the troubles in which his colonial policy had also plunged him in that other portion of the Pacific. For the rest,

he adroitly succeeded in applying a healing plaster to his Samoan sores, in the shape of the protocols of the Conference at Berlin to which he invited England and America, and which again showed—that the Prince had so often already proved by the employment of such diplomatic devices—that there are other sovereign remedies for international disputes besides war.

Yet all these pen-and-ink quarrels into which he had become involved had been but as the inevitable throes of the Empire's colonial new birth, and they were soon forgotten in the joy of its at last possessing offspring of its own beyond the sea. It is true that this offspring had a very sickly, medicine-dosed, and precarious infancy; but sickly children not unfrequently develop into vigorous and productive manhood; and it was in this hope and belief that Bismarck, while professing to be no 'colonial enthusiast' himself, but only the dutiful instrument of the evident will of the German people,—a rôle he had never played before,—resolved that into whatever ownerless lands of the earth German commerce essayed to enter, there the German flag would also follow; and, in the opinion of his grateful countrymen, the carrying out of this resolution in the face of great difficulties entitled him to the credit of having amplified as well as unified the Fatherland; of having been a '*Mehrer des Reichs*' in the truest sense of this phrase, which was one of the proudest titles of the old Emperors.

We have seen how Bismarck's colonial policy involved him in serious disputes with several countries, including England and Spain; and scarcely had these quarrels been compounded, when fresh dangers threatened to embroil Germany in turn with her two most powerful and dreaded neighbours. But for the Prince's yielding attitude in the matter of the French frontier official, Schnaebelen, who had been arrested (in the spring of 1887) by German detectives on the charge of espionage; and but for the pecuniary compensation, accompanied with the sincere regret

of the Imperial Government, which was offered to the French authorities a few months later in the affair of the French sportsman, who had been mistakenly shot for a poacher by a German border-ranger, it is not at all improbable that these incidents might have precipitated that final and decisive war of settlement between the two nations which Bismarck himself said would be a war of positive extermination, '*saigner à blanc*,' when it did come, and for which he had already been preparing by the addition of 700,000 men to the fighting force of the Empire, at a cost of fourteen millions sterling.

Happily, however, it was at this time again averted by his wisdom and his moderation. But hardly had the anger and excitement of the French over these frontier incidents and the new Army Bill had time to subside, when Bismarck perceived, to his astonishment and dismay, that he had again incurred the deep displeasure of the Russians, whose Press began to teem with denunciations of the perfidious German statesman who had duped the Czar and his Government so often. All this was totally incomprehensible to Bismarck, who knew not in what way he had again given offence to the statesmen of St. Petersburg, the less so as he claimed to have done as much for Russia at the Congress of Berlin as if he had been a special plenipotentiary of hers, and to have also practised this conciliatory policy to that Power ever since. Had he not always accorded to Russia a preponderating influence in Bulgaria, which always was, and always would remain, '*Hecuba*' to Germany? Had he not even incurred the obloquy of his countrymen by refusing to be guided by merely sentimental, as distinguished from solid considerations of policy, when Prince Alexander was deposed and kidnapped? And had he, moreover, not refrained from raising a finger or dipping a pen in ink to prevent '*the Battenberger*,' although a German Prince, from succumbing to the fate which had been destined for him by his implacable uncle, the Czar? In

view of all these things, what in the world had the Russians to reproach him with? Why these ugly frowns on the brow of their monarch? Bismarck was destined soon to know from the lips of the offended Czar himself.

The Czar and his family, as usual, had spent the autumn (of 1887) in Denmark, and a variety of causes had rendered it necessary for him to return home through Germany. In these circumstances, the laws of courtesy made it imperative on him to take Berlin on his way, however averse he may otherwise have been from claiming hospitable attentions there at a time when there was so much bad blood between the two nations; in addition to which, he could not have very well abstained from paying what was as much a call of condolence as of courtesy, seeing that the German Crown Prince had but lately been pronounced to be suffering from a fatal disease.

Accordingly, the Czar and his Consort came to Berlin from Copenhagen to visit the old and failing Emperor, by whom their Russian Majesties were received with all due pomp and honour, the festivities including a grand banquet in the Schloss. But previous to that banquet, on the day of his arrival, the Czar had granted a long audience at the Russian Embassy to the German Chancellor, which was one of the most sensational incidents of modern times. It was clear from the Czar's manner that he was suffering from irritation and displeasure of some kind, and his visitor made bold to inquire the reason thereof. His Russian Majesty, with perfect frankness and courage, at once referred to Bulgaria, and to the double part which Germany had been playing in the politics of the Principality, running with the hare, in fact, and hunting with the hounds. Bismarck protested that the policy of the Empire towards the Bulgarian question had been consistent throughout, and free from guile, and that His Majesty must have been grossly misinformed if he thought otherwise. The Czar replied that his sources of information were precise and

absolute—correspondence, in fact, which had come to his knowledge between Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria and the Countess of Flanders, as well as between Prince Ferdinand and Prince Reuss, German Ambassador at Vienna, proving conclusively that the German Government, false to its official declarations, was secretly encouraging the new Prince of Bulgaria with hopes of support. Was that not enough to provoke the anger of any confiding Czar? Bismarck was stupefied, and could only avow again, with all the emphasis of truth, that the Czar had been cruelly imposed upon. 'But there are the documents!' argued His Majesty, in a tone which seemed to admit of no more discussion. 'The documents may be there,' replied the Chancellor, 'but I solemnly declare them to be a bold and impudent forgery, committed for the purpose of sowing distrust and enmity between two friendly nations.'

It was now the Czar's turn to feel thunderstruck; but Bismarck had little difficulty in proving to His Majesty that he had, indeed, been made the credulous victim of a vile conspiracy, and that there was not one single word of truth in the charges of duplicity against German policy in which he had thus been craftily led to believe. The storm-clouds which had of late been gathering round the relations of Russia and Germany at once dispersed, and that same night, at the State banquet in the Schloss, the Czar made a point of raising his glass and drinking a renewed lease of confidence in the much-maligned and misrepresented German Chancellor, as well as in the latter's continued claim to the title of 'honest broker.' A few weeks later the forged despatches were officially given to the world, and though the name of their nefarious author was mercifully withheld, it was declared that they emanated from the camp of the Orleanists (to whom the Prince of Bulgaria, by his mother, was nearly allied), who thus hoped, by setting two Empires by the ears, to precipitate a European conflict, by

the help of which they might make one last desperate push for their fading heritage.

Since the early days of the Franco-German war, when Bismarck struck a heavy blow at the French Government by the publication of the Emperor Napoleon's proposals for a partition of Belgium, no more sensational incident had occurred in the field of European politics than this startling disclosure, that an attempt had been made to embroil Russia and Germany by forged documents misrepresenting the policy of the latter Power; and what rendered the conspiracy all the more dangerous was, that it was contemporaneous with an odious attempt on the part of a small Court clique in Berlin itself to inspire the Czar with the erroneous belief that, in his foreign policy, the Chancellor was not acting in complete harmony with the views of his own Imperial master. In view of all these things, it was little wonder that Russia had again begun to mass threatening numbers of troops on her western frontier, and that the European situation grew so strained and alarming that it could only be relieved by the publication, in February 1888, of the text of the Austro-German Treaty of Defensive Alliance — to which Italy was also known to be party.<sup>1</sup> Thenceforward the tension was much less; but though Bismarck declared, in the Reichstag, that he 'placed absolute confidence in the words of the Emperor Alexander,' this did not prevent him from delivering several energetic speeches, which, for their political wisdom, historical contents, and masterly review of international relations, threw all his previous efforts of the same kind into the shade; and for a few weeks afterwards all Europe rang with the reverberation of his words.

To none had these words of warning and of wisdom given greater pleasure than to the old Emperor, who soon thereafter lay down to die, and who, with his last breath, in the hearing of Bismarck, enjoined upon his grandson the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 204 *ante*.

necessity of always maintaining good relations with Russia. Amid all the sorrows, too, which clouded his dying hours, —sorrows for the son who was lying stricken down with a fatal disease upon a distant shore, — it must have been some comfort to the expiring monarch to reflect that, with the assistance of the man whom he had himself chosen, and clung to through good and evil report, he had been able to keep the peace of Europe for eighteen long years, and that there was, moreover, every prospect of its being still indefinitely preserved by means of that Triple Alliance, which must always be reckoned as Bismarck's greatest masterpiece, and which enabled him once to boast, with pardonable pride in the strength and permanence of his work, '*Wir Deutsche fürchten Gott, und sonst nichts in der Welt*;' which might be read, 'We Germans fear God, and,' with the help of our allies, 'nothing else in the world.'

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE DOMESTIC AFFAIRS OF THE EMPIRE.

IN following the course of the domestic affairs of the Empire, our starting-point must be the 21st March, 1871, —twelve days only after Bismarck's return from France,— when he stood at the side of the Emperor-King in the throne-room of the Old Palace at Berlin, as His Majesty amid much affecting pomp, opened the first German Parliament. The ceremony was the natural sequel of the proclamation of the Empire at Versailles, and formed the completion of Bismarck's creative work. He was now as proud a man as his sovereign was a grateful one; and in token of his gratitude the Emperor (on the day Parliament was opened) raised his Chancellor to the rank of Prince,



and presented him with a valuable estate—Friedrichsruh—in Lauenburg, near Hamburg. Henceforth Friedrichsruh and Varzin alternately shared the honour of sheltering him, when grounds of health or of policy induced his retirement from the capital.

The new Imperial Constitution was admitted to be anything but perfect, either by those who framed or by those who sanctioned it. For, above all things, it made no fresh concessions to parliamentarism. While nominally bestowing on the people parliamentary rights, it virtually made their representatives a merely consultative body. Legislation was assigned to the Bundesrath, or Federal Council,—consisting of the representatives of the sovereigns,—and to the Reichstag, or Imperial Diet, composed of three hundred and eighty-two popular deputies elected by universal ballot. The power of the purse was nominally given to the nation; but, in point of fact, the initiative to all law-making rested with the allied Governments, whose veto has always remained absolute and incontestable. Experience shows that the main function of the Reichstag has been to discuss, for form's sake, and sanction Bills placed before it by the Imperial Government. True, it has frequently rejected measures; but it has never been able to impose its will on the Federal Council, and its champion the Chancellor. By the Imperial Constitution, we repeat, legislation was assigned to the Federal Council and the Diet. But the former body was invested with a decided preponderance of power; and this body, in turn, was subject to the predominating influence of Prussia, whose policy was virtually the will of Bismarck. *L'Allemagne, c'est la Prusse! L'Etat, c'est moi! Le Parlement, c'est moi!*—such, in reality, was the brief sense of the Imperial Constitution in the eyes of the Chancellor. But, with all its deficiencies, the deputies deemed it not ill adapted to the generation it was intended for.

The Constitution was all but unanimously approved;

nevertheless, the nation was not long spared the absence of that spirit of faction which has always been the bane of German Parliaments. It is, indeed, not too much to say that the Empire was no sooner fairly established, than it became exposed to the internal action of disintegrating elements ; and the counteraction of these elements now began, as it continued to be, the pivot on which turned all the domestic policy of the Chancellor. The unity which had been achieved was, after all, of a very heterogeneous kind. We are accustomed to look upon Austria-Hungary as the European type of a conglomerate nation—difficult to be held together and to be governed. But Austria-Hungary was only a little worse in this respect than New Germany, with its Danish, its Polish, and its French-speaking populations ; its contrasts of native races ; the particularism of its various States ; the revolutionary aims smouldering in the breasts of its industrial classes ; and, above all, its marked antagonism between Church and State.

How to garner the territorial harvest of the war—Alsace-Lorraine—was a question which greatly vexed the parliamentary mind, but ultimately the conquered provinces were placed under a sort of dictatorship ; and for the next three years the Reichsland was governed from the Wilhelmstrasse, as India is ruled from Downing Street. Bismarck once said that, of all forms of government, a ‘kindly despotism’ was by far the best, and this was precisely the form he employed to win the hearts of the Alsace-Lorrainers. He was by no means sanguine of this proving an easy task, but he trusted for help to gradual recognition on the part of the inhabitants that, on the whole, ‘the rule of the Germans would be more benevolent and humane than that of the French, and that, under their new masters, they would enjoy a much greater degree of communal and individual freedom.’

The subsequent admission of Alsace-Lorraine deputies into the Reichstag was a venturesome experiment, but Bismarck looked upon it as a potent means of reconciling the

conquered to their fate. It was much better, he thought, that the complaints of the annexed inhabitants should be uttered aloud before the whole nation, and be thus provided with a safety-valve of evaporation, than that they should be cherished in secret at the risk of their finding vent in seditious explosions. Moreover, believing home-rule to be one of the best guarantees of federal cohesion, Bismarck determined to try the effect of this cementing agency on the newest part of the Imperial edifice ; and, in the autumn of 1874, he advised the Emperor to grant the Alsace-Lorrainers (not by law, but by ordinance, which could easily be revoked) a previous voice on all Bills to be submitted to the Reichstag on the domestic and fiscal affairs of their provinces. This voice was meanwhile to be merely consultative, and it was not to be uttered in public ; but still, this would be a long stride towards the same degree of self-government in the Reichsland as was enjoyed by the other members of the Empire.

Thus it ultimately came about that, while the Reichsland continued to be governed from Berlin, the making of its laws was more and more confined to Strasburg. The party of the Irreconcilables had been gradually giving way to the Autonomists, or those who subordinated the question of nationality to that of home-rule. Rapidly gaining in strength, this latter party at last (in the spring of 1879) petitioned the Reichstag for an independent Government, with its seat in Strasburg, for the representation of the Reichsland in the Federal Council, and for an enlargement of the functions of the Provincial Committee. Nothing could have been more gratifying to Bismarck than this request, amounting, as it did, to a reluctant recognition of the Treaty of Frankfort on the part of the Alsace-Lorrainers. He therefore replied that he was quite willing to confer on the provinces 'the highest degree of independence compatible with the military security of the Empire.' Parliament, without distinction of party, applauded his words ; and not only that, but it hastened to

pass a Bill embodying ideas at which the Chancellor himself had hinted in the previous year.

By this Bill, the government of Alsace-Lorraine was to centre in a Statthalter, or Imperial Viceroy, living at Strasbourg, instead of, as heretofore, in the Chancellor, and in his subordinate in the Reichsland bearing the title of Supreme President. Without being a sovereign, this Statthalter was to exercise all but sovereign rights ; and he was to be assisted by a Ministry, as well as by a State Council. Further, it was to be in his power to depute commissaries, with a consultative voice, to the Federal Council. Finally, the Bill conferred the right of receiving petitions on the *Landesausschuss*, and nearly doubled its members, who would have to take the oath of allegiance to the Empire. Home-rule legislation was to remain, as hitherto, the business of the Provincial Committee and the Federal Council ; while the law, which invested the Government with arbitrary, or state-of-siege powers, was still to be at the service of the Statthalter.

The Chancellor now ceased to be responsible for the government of Alsace-Lorraine ; but though Marshal Manteuffel, the first Statthalter, was subject to no authority save that of the Emperor, the principles which always guided his action were cordially approved by Bismarck. And these principles may be summed up in the one word—conciliation. To such an extent, indeed, did the Marshal carry this policy, that he frequently became the object, no less of bitter attack on the part of the German Press, than of wilful opposition on the part of his subordinates ; and several of the latter even had to pay for their excess of zeal with their posts. The first Statthalter ruled with a firm yet indulgent hand, and he repeatedly told his quasi-subjects that he would give them all they wanted, on one single condition—frank allegiance to the Reich ; while Bismarck declared that Alsace-Lorraine must for ever be and remain the ‘glacis of the Empire.’

Having thus shown how Bismarck garnered the 'territorial harvest' of the war, we must now glance at the disposal of the French milliards, which flooded the Empire in streams of gold. Out of these milliards a sum of four million thalers, or about £600,000, was voted for distribution by the Emperor among the leading soldiers and statesmen of the war; while forty million thalers, or about six millions sterling, in specie, were appointed to be set aside in the Julius Tower at Spandau as a *Reichskriegsschatz*, or Imperial War-Chest Fund, against the coming of another evil day. Bismarck pointed out that this was an absolute necessity of modern warfare, and that, but for the fact of Prussia having had a *Kriegsschatz* (of thirty million thalers), it would have been impossible for her to mobilise her army within a fortnight, and thus anticipate the French on the left bank of the Rhine.

With the rest of the milliards the victims of the war were generously cared for, fortresses built, new strategic lines of railway constructed, the building of an Imperial fleet begun,—a fleet that was in a few years to become the second strongest on the Continent,—and the treasuries of the individual States filled to bursting with plethoric sums. The poor and needy Germans looked up, and, lo! the clouds seemed to rain down gold, as once they dropped manna in the wilderness. The land overflowed with money; credit rose with a bound; every branch of industry was seized with a fever of over-production; the capital itself, that *ville parvenue*, as a Frenchman once described it, became more upstart than ever; and in less than no time the young Empire was in the midst of its '*Gründer-Era*,' or Period of Business Bubbles. The Strousbergs, the Levis, the Aarons, and the Cohens grew and flourished like green bay-trees. Every Jew became a John Law, and every street in Berlin a Rue de Quincampoix. But the Jews, who have a complete monopoly of finance at Berlin, found it difficult to outstrip the Gentiles in the race for wealth, and thus

there arose a desperate struggle for the golden harvest. All classes were infected with the prevailing fever, which even seized hold on several who breathed the pure and bracing moral atmosphere of the Court, and the not less unpolluted air of the Prussian bureaucracy. •

But at last the "Crash" came, and with it the reaction. The turning-point was reached in the spring of 1873, when the Liberal Deputy, Herr Lasker, in several speeches of great eloquence and power, essayed to show to the scandalised nation that some high officials, notably in the Ministry of Commerce, had been guilty of grave malpractices in the matter of railway concessions. Of these malpractices, Herr Lasker, a Jew, undertook the exposure all the more readily as the delinquents were not members of his own speculating and gambling race, but blood-proud Junkers and titled Christians. Lasker's arraignment turning out to have some slender basis of truth, it resulted in the resignation of Count Itzenplitz, Minister of Commerce, and in the pensioning of one of his chief officials.

The Chief Minister of the Crown, who had stood in the breach while little lisping Lasker delivered his assaults against official corruption and Tory privilege, was General von Roon; for, a few days previously (New Year's Day, 1873), the King had relieved Bismarck from the post of Minister-President, with an assurance of his 'never-dying gratitude,' and the Black Eagle in brilliants. The Chancellor, such was the ostensible reason for his retirement, had found it impossible to do justice to the duties of his Imperial office as well as to preside over the Prussian Cabinet, and so Count Roon, the War Minister, was appointed to the latter post. But if the Chancellor found it impossible to perform both functions to his heart's content, the nation found it more impossible still to do without him at the head of Prussia as well as of Imperial affairs, and so, before the year was out, he was again installed, to the general relief, in his presidential office.

But, indeed, there was a large and growing party who

would have rejoiced to see him fall like Wolsey, or 'like Lucifer, never to rise again.' He had sworn enemies at Court, and he was an object of intense hatred to a clique of mediæval Tories and Ultramontanes, who aimed at bringing about his fall, or at least at 'worrying him to death.' This, too, only four short years after the Peace of Frankfort ! He was already paying the inevitable price of his power and his greatness. The Clericals loathed him for having placed their Church in bonds ; there was a strong aristocratic faction who resented his treatment of his audacious rival, Count Arnim ; and the Prussian Feudalists had risen up in arms against some of his Liberal reforms. He was denounced by the Conservatives as the 'patron of Lasker ;' and the bombs which Lasker had pitched into the financial camp of the Conservatives were quickly followed by Conservative shells that burst among the flesh-pots of the Liberals. Men like Delbrück, Camphausen, and Bleichröder, the Berlin banker, financed for Prussia and the Empire ; and the rancour of the Conservatives culminated in the charge that the Chancellor had farmed out the German Budget to this worthy triumvirate, and that, as regards the banker in question, he was now thus requiting him for the substantial support he had received from him in the days when he was an obscure and needy diplomatist. Bismarck angrily characterised this charge as a wicked and a baseless libel, and called upon all the subscribers of the *Kreuz-Zeitung*, in which it had appeared, to testify their disgust by ceasing to take it in. But this bold attempt to 'boycot' his own old journal was only answered by an indignant protest on the part of several hundreds of its aristocratic readers—whose names, *per contra*, were pilloried in the official *Gazette*—to the effect that they 'refused to take their notions of honour and decency from the Herr Reichskanzler.'

That 'security before freedom' was the main legislative maxim of the Chancellor, could not have been better proved than by the Bill for reorganising the Army, which

was debated about the same time as the Press Law, in the spring of 1874.<sup>1</sup> In 1871, instead of passing the military estimates for a twelvemonth, the Diet had granted a lump-sum to maintain the army in undiminished strength for a provisional period of three years. The object of this lump-sum, as the Government said, was 'to convince the whole world (especially France), that in the year 1874, Germany, under all circumstances, would be as strong and formidable as she was at the end of the war.' The year 1874 had now arrived, and it therefore again behoved the Government to look to the joints and fastenings of its armour. This it did by asking the nation to fix the strength of the army at its then peace-establishment (of about 401,659 men), 'until otherwise provided by law;' or, in other words, it invited Parliament to surrender its right of control over the military estimates until such time as the Government should think fit to restore it. By the Imperial Constitution, the peace-establishment of the army had been provisionally fixed at about one per cent. of the inhabitants, on the basis of the census of 1867; but though, since this year, the population of Germany had greatly increased, it was not yet proposed to raise the defensive power of the Empire in due proportion. Numerically speaking, the German army was still only the third largest in Europe; but what it lacked in numbers it possessed in efficiency, and the military leaders were quite content that it should remain so, provided only that it should not be exposed to the economic caprices of artificial majorities, to the whims of the Joseph Humes and the short-sighted apostles of an impossible millennium in the popular assembly.

<sup>1</sup> By this law the Press of all Germany was relieved from some vexatious restrictions—such as stamp-duty, censorship, and bail for good behaviour—under which it had hitherto groaned; but still it remained subject to a series of severe penal provisions, calculated to establish in the mind of every public writer a wholesome equilibrium between the sense of freedom and the sense of fear.



It was in vain that Moltke, the greatest strategist of the age, the man whose patriotism was above suspicion, the soldier whose opinions were accepted as law by all but Radical laymen; it was to no purpose, we say, that Moltke—reviewing the European situation—urged that ‘what Germany had won with the sword in half a year, she would require to defend with the sword for half a century.’ A serious parliamentary crisis supervened, and it almost seemed as if the Conflict Era was about to return. For weeks and months the country was in a state of fierce excitement, but the addresses and other forms of manifestation that came pouring in from all parts of the Empire admitted of little doubt that the feeling of the nation, on the whole, was with the Government. The German people are proud enough of their Parliament, but they are far prouder of the army which made it possible for them to have this Parliament; and if they were placed before the alternative of choosing between these two institutions, there can be no doubt as to which of them they would rather see go by the board.

Writhing with physical pain, Bismarck lay on his sick-bed, storming at the unpatriotism of the Opposition, and muttering threats of resignation and dissolution. The Emperor, too, was in anything but a yielding mood. Parliament might do what it liked with other matters, but the army was a thing as to which he would brook no interference. To his Generals, therefore, who came to offer him the usual birthday congratulations (22nd March), he poured out his feelings, said that his life-task culminated in the Military Law, vowed that he never could die happy unless it were duly passed, and appealed to them to stand by him to a man. To his Chancellor’s bedside also he repaired, and begged counsel of the prostrate giant whether he should appeal to the country, or accept the compromise which, with the view of obviating another Conflict Era, had been proposed by the Bennigsen section of the National

Liberals. Adopting a middle course, these deputies suggested that, while it was in the interests of the nation not to make any reduction of the army, the fixing of its present peace-strength might meanwhile very well be limited to seven years. The Emperor himself was anything but willing to accept this compromise; but on this, as on many other occasions, he ultimately yielded to the moderate counsel of his Chancellor. The Emperor gave way; the compromise was effected after months of bitter wrangling, and a majority passed the Law of what, in allusion to Marshal MacMahon's tenure of office, was called the Military Septennate. By this law, Parliament freely signed away its right to control the army-budget for the space of seven years; and it has repeatedly renewed its bond of renunciation. It was wise of it to recognise the truth—as applicable, at least, to Germany—that military security is a higher blessing than party power; and that, whatever the parliamentary longings of the nation, it was well that they should remain ungratified as long as there might be danger in their realisation. 'The theory,' said Professor Gneist, a mine of constitutional lore,— 'the theory of determining the strength of the army by an annual budget is incompatible with the idea of conscription.'

We have shown how the main supporting pillar of the Empire, the army, was made immovably firm; and now we must proceed to enumerate the chief hasps and rivets that were driven into the edifice. Of these rivets, the most important was that formed by the new Judicature Acts. No nation could be said to be one within itself which lived under a hundred various systems of law. The Government of the North German Confederation, it is true, had compiled both a Criminal and a Commercial Code, which were adopted by the Empire; but a Civil Code was still wanting, and the boldest hearts shrank from an undertaking which seemed to be as impossible as it was patriotic. Meanwhile, it was seen that much might be done in the field of legal procedure, and already, in opening the Reichstag in the autumn

of 1874, the Emperor had dwelt upon the supreme necessity of establishing unity in this respect. By the winter of 1876 the Judicature Committee had presented the Reichstag with the result of its labours; and at last, after another parliamentary crisis which was only overcome by the usual compromise, the 1st October, 1879, was fixed for the new Judicature Acts to come into operation.

But the controversy on the subject was not yet over, and the next session (spring of 1877) furnished a striking illustration of those centrifugal forces which, as we previously remarked, began to act upon the Empire as soon as ever it had been fairly fixed in its national orbit. The Judicature Acts had created a Supreme Imperial Tribunal, but now there arose a burning controversy as to where this court should have its local habitation. To Bismarck, in his simplicity, it never occurred that any objection would be taken to Berlin, which was the capital of the whole Empire, the residence of the Kaiser, the seat of the Legislature, the growing focus of social and intellectual life. But he was cruelly mistaken. The Federal Governments would not hear of Berlin as the seat of the Supreme Court, and proposed Leipzig instead. Their ostensible motive for this extraordinary proposal was that the Supreme Tribunal for Commercial Affairs, founded in 1869, which served as the germ of the new growth, had sat at Leipzig, and that there was now no reason why the full-blown tree should be transplanted to Berlin. But no one was deceived by this shallow and unsatisfactory reason. The truth is that there was now a recrudescence of that particularist feeling which had been the traditional bane of Germany. The Federal States looked with a jealous eye on the progress of centralisation, and thought that Prussia had done enough in this respect. These reasons, too, were repeated and emphasised in the Reichstag; but with the addition that justice, above all things, required to be pure, and that the judges of the Supreme Court would be none the worse for being removed

from a possible source of intimidation and corruption. The Chancellor held aloof from the debates, dumbfounded and grieved; grieved to think that, in spite of all he had done for his nation, it still seemed resolved to continue the 'hole and corner' existence which it had led in a hundred different capitals; grieved to think that Germany, unlike France or England, laid no apparent store on possessing a chief city in which should centre all the elements that tend to make a nation one and indivisible; and grieved to think that his countrymen had acted as absurdly as Englishmen would do, if they insisted on transferring their Supreme Courts of Law from London to Liverpool.

But if Germany had now ceased to a great extent to live in a labyrinth of laws, she was still hopelessly lost in a railway chaos. What were a hundred different systems of law, compared with about fifteen hundred railway tariffs? Was this national unity? By the Imperial Constitution, the Federal Governments had bound themselves, in the general interest, to convert all the German lines into one systematised net; but half-a-dozen years had passed away, and the article in question was still a dead letter. Already, in 1873, an Imperial Railway Board had been created to serve as the crystallising point for further endeavours in the desired direction; but this was like opening a shop without wares, and three years of experience had shown that the dictates of this Department were utterly discarded. The only field of its positive jurisdiction were the railways of Alsace-Lorraine; but its authority was mocked at by the 'sixty-three railway provinces' into which, as Bismarck bitterly complained, Germany was still mediævally divided.

The railways in some of the States were of two kinds, private or State property. Now Bismarck, in the interest of the Empire, aimed at reducing and systematising the tariffs of all these lines; but it soon became clear that, while the Federal States had no objection to seeing all the private companies brought under Imperial control, they obstinately

refused to expose their own domestic budgets to the danger of diminution by subjecting their State railroads to a whittling process of assimilation. On the other hand, it was certain that any Bill which did not treat private and State lines on the same footing, would have no chance whatever of passing the Imperial Parliament; and thus, after tentative steps in various directions, Bismarck came to the conclusion that the problem could only be solved if the Empire bought over both the public and private lines in the various States, and became the sole railway proprietor in the nation.

Buy over was easily said, but the chief question was whether railway owners were prepared to sell; and, unfortunately, neither the Governments nor the companies showed any alacrity in going to the market. Bismarck admitted that, with all its power, the Imperial Government could not compel railway proprietors to vend their lines to it, and that his chief standpoint was formed by the hope that, in this case, they would at last see the wisdom of subordinating their pockets to their patriotism. By taking all the railways into its hands, urged the foes of the Chancellor's policy, the Imperial Government would acquire far too much political and financial power. With a railway revenue of 800 millions, it could tyrannise over the money market; it would make the budget rights of Parliament a hollow mockery; and it would have at its beck and call an army of officials who could influence the result of any election. The Empire was suffering acutely enough already from centralisation, and ought to be spared a further aggravation of its malady. That Government was best which governed least; but now the German people were threatened with a further display of that spirit of meddling on the part of their rulers which had gradually deprived them of all power of initiative, and converted them into the mere passive and de-individualised units of a huge State machine.

It was to no purpose that, in answer to these objections, Bismarck contended that his railway policy was much more economic than political in its aims; in vain did he scoff at the notion that 'German freedom and unity would be swept away with the first Imperial locomotive.' No; he could not persuade the Federal Governments to look at the matter in the same light as himself. He felt that he was a man before his time, and yet he resolved to take time by the forelock, so as not to be wholly balked of his patriotic purpose. There was no immediate prospect of his railway policy being espoused, either by the Federal Governments or by the Reichstag; and meanwhile he determined to hasten the opening up of this prospect by counselling Prussia alone to prepare for doing what he called 'an act of abdication in favour of the Empire.' This preparatory act took the form of a Bill for empowering the Prussian Government to sell to the Reich all the railways which it owned itself, and make over to it all the administrative and supervisory rights which it exercised over private lines.

This Bill was debated by the Prussian Parliament in the spring of 1876, and for six months all Germany was absorbed with it; for it was admitted that a revision of the Constitution even could not be more momentous. After much acrimonious opposition it became law, but this law has not yet been acted on. The railways belonging to the Empire are still only those of Alsace-Lorraine. The law has not been acted on, but that was not the fault of Bismarck. He had been empowered to sell the Prussian railways to the Empire but the Empire has never yet shown any inclination to purchase either the Prussian or any other lines. The apathy of the Federal Governments, as well as the procrastination of his Prussian colleagues, were too much for the Chancellor, with all his power and with all his will. When, in the spring, he begged that a move might at last be made in the matter, he was told that nothing could be done till the autumn; and when the autumn came, he was

always informed that unforeseen circumstances had rendered imperative a postponement of the business till the following spring. Thus, from year to year, his dearest hopes were deferred ; but though his heart was sickened with the deferring of his hopes, his hand was not stayed with the palsy of inaction.

The day must come, he knew, when the railway-article of the Imperial Constitution would be a living truth, and meanwhile there was a means at his disposal, not only of accelerating the approach of that day, but also at the same time of obviating the evils under which public traffic suffered by reason of its non-arrival. Prussia was equal to two-thirds of the whole of Germany, and, of the sixty-three railway administrations which distracted the Empire, forty of these were in Prussia. Pending, therefore, the ripening of a resolution on the part of the Empire to take upon itself the cares of universal proprietorship, it was plainly, thought Bismarck, the duty of Prussia to simplify the process of transformation by converting all the Prussian lines into one homogeneous system, or, in other words, to buy up all her private companies, and thus make the State the exclusive railway owner in the kingdom.

For the next few years, therefore, a prominent feature in the proceedings of the Prussian Diet was the discussion of contracts by which the Government had purchased the lines of private companies. The companies were not actually threatened with expropriation unless they accepted the offers of the Government, but the freedom of their will was necessarily restricted by the certainty of a fall in their dividends should they choose to compete with the low-pitched tariffs of the State lines. *Coactus voluit*. He who, in Prussia, attempts to compete with the State, is a ruined man. In all cases the above-mentioned treaties were approved by the Chamber, though not, of course, without strenuous opposition from the champions of free trade and free competition ; and, by the spring of 1882, the principle

of the State system of railways in Prussia had completely triumphed.

To better the finances of the Empire, and render it independent of 'matricular contributions' from the States forming its component parts, had long been Bismarck's serious aim; but the winter of 1875 was reached before he could make his first serious attempt at fiscal reform. Yet this first attempt ended in complete failure. The Chancellor proposed to increase the beer-tax, and impose a tax on Bourse transactions; but to neither one nor the other of these proposals would the country lend a willing ear. What Parliament contended was, not that either of these imposts, especially the latter, would be 'unjust, but that they were unnecessary. If the Government wanted to save itself from deficits, and to spare the treasuries of the Federal States, it might practise greater economy. Bismarck said some very flattering things to the Reichstag about its omnipotence in the fiscal field, but it would not listen to his blandishments; so he waved it an apparently good-humoured '*au revoir*,' with the assurance that 'the ideal at which I aim is to meet the wants of the State as exclusively as possible with indirect taxes.'

But the stubbornness of the Opposition, the lukewarmness of his colleagues, and the engrossing nature of his labours in connection with the foreign affairs of the Empire, prevented him from doing much to realise this ideal for the next few years. Indeed, he began to despair of ever being able to realise it at all, and in his despondency he was driven to the resolution to quit the helm of the State vessel, which he could no longer steer according to his mind. In the spring of 1877 he reminded Parliament that he was meditating a thorough scheme of financial reform, adding that he never would be happy until it was carried through; and in a few days afterwards the nation was no less astonished than alarmed to hear that he had sent in his resignation to the Emperor. The Chancellor's patience was



exhausted. He was being thwarted on every hand. The perversity of his countrymen in selecting Leipzig as the seat of the Supreme Court had worried him beyond measure. His foes at Court were malignantly active. His health was shattered, his temper was embittered, and he spoke of himself as a 'broken old man.' His ministerial colleagues would not all dance as their master fided, and the pressure of official 'frictions' was sore upon him.

A cry of alarm and of protest at once arose throughout all Germany, and the feelings of Germany were to a great extent shared by Europe. The Russo-Turkish war was just on the point of beginning, and it was felt that the absence of Bismarck from the helm of affairs would involve a great additional danger to the peace of Europe. Even in Paris it was said that Bismarck might die, but that he never could resign. The vast bulk of his countrymen pronounced his loss to be utterly irreparable, and his further services to be indispensable. Even Dr. Windthorst warmly denied that the prospect of the Chancellor's retirement had 'brought joy and gladness into the camp of the Clericals.' It is not, indeed, employing the language of exaggeration to say, that the nation conjured the man who had done such great things for it to continue at its head; and when the wish of the nation was so unanimous and clear, the Emperor could have no hesitation in asserting his own will. His Majesty, therefore, sent back to the Chancellor his petition for leave to resign, with a brief and emphatic 'Never!' written on the margin. That famous 'Never!' relieved the nation from a horrible anxiety, and was received with joy by Europe. The Chancellor might take a long holiday for the restoration of his health, but he durst not take his leave. The Prince, accordingly, saw that there was nothing for him but to comply with the will of the nation, and doubtless he felt all the less reluctant to do this, as discerning that he had now discovered an infallible means of inclining the nation to comply in future with his will—a means of

which he was afterwards not slow to make repeated use. He withdrew to Varzin, but his furlough was a mockery. Prometheus might escape from his rock, but the eagle of public care continued to pursue him. It was during this period of partial repose that he compared himself to a 'wearied hunter,' worn out with fatigue after a bootless search for game the live-long day. But, just when ready to drop, the beaters sing out to him their discovery of a couple of splendid boars, and away at once he starts in pursuit of his tusky prey with lithesome step and reawakened zeal. And so, too, would he (the Chancellor) buckle to his work again with renewed energy, in order to finish what he had taken in hand, if but he had the assistance of the necessary beaters to drive before his gun the running game.

By 'beaters,' the Chancellor meant a compact and obedient majority in the Reichstag, without which he felt he could do nothing; and yet among the moors of Pomerania he continued to brood over his schemes of financial reform, and to devise means by which, to use his own expression, he might be able to 'make the Empire fiscally stand upon its own legs.' Nevertheless, he remained like wrathful Achilles in his tent, vowing that, unless he received 'assurance of spontaneous help from *all* competent authorities in Prussia' in the execution of his tax-reform plans (railway policy, etc.), he 'would, indeed, health at all permitting, appear in Parliament when next it met, but only to set forth the reasons of my final retirement from office.' Shortly after this, however, he was visited by a sort of Patroclus in the person of Herr von Bennigsen, and the two discussed the conditions under which the National Liberals would combine with the Conservatives to form a Bismarck party *sans phrase*, or, in other words, a diligent and obedient body of Government 'beaters.'

At the same time the Prince's official labours were lightened by the creation of the office of Vice-Chancellor, and Count Stolberg-Wernigerode, one of the wealthiest and

most powerful noblemen in all Germany, was persuaded to exchange the pleasant and comparatively independent position of Ambassador at Vienna for the new post, a post which he resigned after an experience of three years had convinced him of the imprudence of ever having yielded to the solicitations of the Emperor in defiance of his own doubts and fears. For he must be a man of peculiarly constituted mind and character, who, as a colleague or subordinate of the Chancellor, could at once retain for any length of time the favour of his Chief and a sense of his own independence. Many had tried to perform this double feat, but most had failed; and the Wilhelm-Strasse, so to speak, began to be strewn as thickly with the bodies of these adventurous men, as is the Hyperborean Sea with the bones of the rash explorers who have struggled to reach the North Pole.

As the outcome of recent negotiations between Bismarck and his colleagues, the speech from the Imperial throne (opening the spring session of 1878) announced the introduction of Bills for increasing the tobacco tax, and for the levying of further stamp dues with the object of rendering the Empire independent of 'matricular contributions.' But the chief positive result of these measures was merely the fall of their author, Herr Camphausen. Bismarck himself frankly admitted that a 'tobacco monopoly' was the ideal at which he aimed, and that the present measure was a mere transition step in that direction. But he had meanwhile to content himself as best he could with the granting of a shabby tax on playing-cards, and with the reluctant appointment of a commission of inquiry into the tobacco industry. It was no wonder, therefore, that the Chancellor now again began to lose heart, and to despair of ever being able to realise his dream of rendering his beloved Empire wholly 'independent of outdoor relief;' when suddenly there occurred an event which, while interrupting for a while the current of his ideas in this direction,

only gave him additional stimulus to translate them into accomplished facts.

This was the pistol-shots which the Socialist youth Hödel fired at the Emperor on the 11th May, 1878, as His Majesty was driving down the Linden, and near the spot where Bismarck himself had been similarly assailed in 1866. Brainless, heartless, low, uneducated, and contemptible as Hödel personally was, his crime had to be accepted as the direct and logical outcome of a movement which had hitherto been making as insidious progress as an advancing tide, and which now suddenly arrested attention in a manner that made Bismarck turn and start to find himself confronted with the threatening Red Spectre of the time. Ever since the French war that Red Spectre had been making rapid strides. The milliards had not arrested it, as Milanion's golden apples stayed the course of Atalanta; the 'Crash' of 1873 had quickened its pace; the industrial depression of the nation had added to its stature; and the grinding militarism of the Empire had lent it the appearance of a grinning skeleton in armour. At the general election in 1871, only three per cent. of the votes had been cast by Social-Democrats, and within six years this percentage had been trebled. At the election in 1877, nearly half a million of the voters belonged to this party. Two of their representatives sat in the first German Parliament, twelve in the third. It was little wonder that this rate of progression was viewed by Bismarck with dismay, and, pending compliance with the fair demands of the Red Spectre, he made repeated attempts to arrest its pace.

But the Liberalism of the young Empire was too proud to sanction penal clauses in the Press Law against a particular class. Already, in the spring of 1876, when a Bill for amending the Criminal Code was under discussion, the Chancellor pleaded warmly, but vainly, for a more repressive clause against the Social-Democrats, to whose unreasonable ideals of the future he attributed in a great measure

that spirit of restlessness among the labouring classes, which had ended by rendering the 'German working-day very much less productive than the French or English one.' And, meanwhile, he urged Parliament to combat this evil with 'means as yet quite independent of the hangman,' whose hands, he evidently thought, would be full enough by and by if things were allowed to go on as they were. But his warnings were unheeded, and they remained so until the savage murmurs of dissatisfaction among the working-classes, growing ever louder and louder, at last found imperious expression in the double report of Hödel's revolver.

These pistol-shots were the starting signal for Bismarck to run a new race; they marked the commencement of what has been called the 'Economic Era' of his career. The growling of the Red Monster, he saw, could not be any longer disregarded; so he at once resolved to turn aside and parley with it, but only after he had rendered it mute and innocuous by compressive muzzle and compulsive chains. Hödel fired his pistol on the 11th of May; next day from Varzin to Berlin came the peremptory order to draft a law for repressing the excesses of Social-Democracy; and in the course of forty-eight hours this Bill was before Parliament. The Press of Germany—not to speak of Europe—had burst out into one unanimous cry of execration against Hödel's crime; and Bismarck thought that the tide of popular indignation and sympathy thus created would, if taken at the flood, lead him on to the attainment of his legislative aim. But he was mistaken.

Not the serious representations of the Government itself, not the simple but powerful eloquence of Moltke—nothing could as yet persuade Parliament to pass a law which struck at the most recently-acquired and most highly-prized pledges of popular liberty—the right of public meeting, and freedom of spoken and written speech. All admitted the evil which the law was meant to combat, but

most contended that the law itself would be a greater evil than the one it was intended to cure. The brief debates on the subject only gave the Liberals of all shades an opportunity of declaiming against exceptional measures, while the Clericals—groaning themselves under repressive laws—affected to sympathise with those of their fellow-subjects who were threatened with similar coercion, and ascribed the growth of Social-Democracy to the restrictions put upon the educational influence of the Catholic Church. The Chancellor's repressive measure was rejected by a very large majority. He had been baulked of his resolution to muzzle and chain up the Red Monster before proceeding to parley with it.

Meanwhile the Red Monster, grown all the more wildly exultant at beholding this, began to rage with redoubled fury. Nor was its fury long in communicating itself to Dr. Karl Nobiling, who, on the 2nd June, shot at and severely wounded the Emperor, as he was again driving down the Linden Avenue. It was not pretended that the Social-Democratic party, as a party, must be held responsible for the crimes of Hödel and Nobiling, in the sense that a society of conspirators is accountable for the execution of their murderous will by one chosen instrument—for there was nothing to show that either of the would-be assassins of the Emperor did not act on his own independent impulse. But it was demonstrable, on the other hand, that, in the case of both miscreants, this impulse was generated by the hope of hastening the realisation of those revolutionary ideas preached by the most extreme and dangerous section of the Social-Democrats.

Another storm of execration, louder and more furious than before, now swept over Germany. What was humanity coming to? 'I should have thought,' said Bismarck to General Grant, who visited Berlin about this time, 'that the Emperor could have passed through the whole of his dominions alone without danger, and now they seek to kill

him.' Horror and stupefaction reigned at Berlin. The Emperor had not been mortally wounded, but his condition was such as to render him meanwhile incapable of holding the reins of Government; and these, therefore, were at once entrusted to the Crown Prince, who, on hearing of his father's grievous plight, had hastened home from London—where, by the way, he had himself been exposed to an insulting demonstration on the part of some German Socialists. As for Bismarck, prostrate with illness as he was himself, he started up and hurried from his country-seat to the camp-couch of his beloved sovereign. The rejection of his anti-Socialist Law had renewed within him the desire, if not, indeed, the determination, to withdraw from the service of a people whose will in some things proved stronger than his; but these thoughts vanished when he came to Berlin. 'After beholding my lord and King lying there in his blood,' he once said, 'I made a silent vow that never against his will would I leave the service of a master, who on his part had thus adventured life and limb in the performance of his duty to God and man.' Bismarck left the Palace nerved with the spirit of resolute and instantaneous action. Thrice in the course of the last five years he had vainly implored Parliament to grant him legal means of counteracting the agencies which had thus, for the second time, found vent in such a manner, and now he saw that the evil had to be cured instead of prevented. Accordingly, Parliament was dissolved to make way for one more alive to the necessities of the time, and more pliable to the Chancellor's iron will.

Favoured by the feelings of horror which still possessed the nation, the new elections resulted in a decided strengthening of the Conservative element in the Reichstag, at the expense of the various Liberal fractions, and even the Social-Democrats themselves lost several seats. But still the National Liberals had the casting vote in their hands, and the views of this party on the subject of Social-Demo-

crazy had undergone a complete change since the commission of Nobiling's crime. Of two necessary evils—Socialism, or the means proposed for its repression—the followers of Herr von Bennigsen had formerly looked upon the latter as the greater evil, but now they thought contrariwise. Though differing in some respects from its predecessor, the new measure was of a very sweeping, incisive, and despotic character — empowering, as it did, the Government to dissolve societies and meetings, to confiscate and forbid publications of a revolutionary tendency, as well as to declare certain localities in a state of siege, and to expel from their places of residence all those held to be dangerous or obnoxious under the law. The law, in fact, gave the police absolute power to prevent the self-assertion of Social-Democracy by pernicious acts of any kind, or by the spoken and written word ; power to fasten it completely under hatches, so to speak, and to convert it from an open into an underground current. Even in its new form the Bill met with considerable opposition, but the Government was animated by a reasonable spirit of compromise, and after Bismarck, in two masterly speeches, had dilated on the nature and causes of the social revolution, which he described as 'one of the worms that never die,' Parliament at last passed his measure by a majority of seventy-two. On the same day it was dismissed, with thanks ; and Germany was committed to an experiment of a most momentous kind, which could not fail to be watched with interest by all European peoples.

The law against the Socialists was at once administered with relentless severity. Their societies were dissolved, their meetings were forbidden, their publications were suppressed, their literature was declared contraband, and they themselves in great numbers were summarily expelled from their places of residence, and cast into the stream of life to sink or swim. Never did the Inquisition exercise its power with greater vigilance or greater effect. Opposition was utterly out of



the question, as, indeed, it had been pronounced by the Social-Democrats themselves to be impolitic; and it was not long before the channels of their public agitation had all been effectually stopped up, and this agitation itself rendered as invisible as the fish-torpedo, which only reveals its destructive course by a faint ripple on the surface of the sea.

The pistol-shots of Hödel, as we remarked, were the starting signal for Bismarck to run a new race. From that moment his thoughts acquired a new concentration and a new shape. Hitherto his attention had been mainly devoted to questions of foreign policy, but now he was quick to perceive that, if he was to retain his position as the foremost statesman of his age, he must transfer his energies to utterly fresh fields and pastures new. The old political and dynastic issues, which had for so many centuries convulsed Europe, were practically exhausted. All the old forces of society had lost, or were losing, their hold upon mankind. The nations, though armed to the teeth, had no longer any confidence in armies, and although every hamlet had its church, the spiritual power had ceased to mould the conscience and shape the lives of mankind. For the first time in the world's history, statesmen were face to face with an educated proletariat, with a keen passion for material well-being, and without any active hope of a life beyond the grave. To govern on the old lines was impossible. To waste the resources of statesmanship on the barren issues of politics or of frontiers was suicidal. The solution of the Social Problem was the task on which the whole energies of the State should be concentrated, and if the sovereigns and statesmen of Europe did not lay aside their petty differences, and devote themselves to the task of ameliorating the condition of the people whom they ruled, they would not continue to rule long. So thought Bismarck, and with him to think was to act. 'A great man struggling with the storms of fate,' said an eloquent American, 'has been called a

sublime spectacle ; but surely a great man wrestling with these new forces that have come into the world, mastering them and controlling them to beneficent ends, would be a yet sublimer.'

This, then, was the sublime task to which Prince Bismarck now addressed himself with all the Herculean energy of his nature. After a life spent in struggles that would have consumed the strength of a score of ordinary men, he now set himself to grapple with a problem which none of the boldest of his contemporaries had ever yet had the courage to tackle. It is still impossible to foresee whether the Unifier of Germany will also be hailed by posterity as the 'Saviour of Society ;' but even his contemporaries will not deny that he, at least, was the first statesman who took the salvation of society seriously in hand. Every nation in Europe was beginning to be agitated to the depths by its land and labour questions, by its aggressive antagonism between poor and rich, by the flaring up of its revolutionary embers ; but while other statesmen were blindly indifferent or comparatively inactive, the German Chancellor went straight to the root of the common evil with all the thoroughness and impetuous earnestness of his nature.

It was a popular notion that Prince Bismarck, by Divine appointment and personal preference, was a statesman caring more for the foreign relations than the domestic condition of his country, and, indeed, possessing little real talent for dealing with social problems. Certainly this popular belief received a certain plausibility from the fact that, for the first sixteen years of his ministerial career, the Chancellor was too engrossed with questions affecting the external stability of the State to be able to devote much time to the examination and strengthening of its internal rivets. Cato may have only begun to acquire Greek at the age of eighty, but it is a mistake to suppose that Bismarck was well-nigh becoming a septuagenarian before he applied himself to the serious study of social science. The mind

which could devise the unification of Germany and secure it from war for a period of at least twenty years, was also large enough to brood in secret on comprehensive schemes of domestic reform, pending the arrival of the fitting time for their execution. It was not until Hödel and Nobiling (in 1878) had fired their anarchic weapons that Bismarck really set his determined hand to the plough, with a view to root up the rank and malodorous weeds of popular discontent which were threatening to choke the healthy life of the nation. But the published documents relating to his economic policy, beginning with the year 1862, already contain the germs of most of the ideas which have borne fruit, and promise still more, in the practical application by Bismarck in his latter-day character as Saviour of Society.

'For me always,' said the Chancellor once in the Reichstag, 'there has only been one compass, and one pole-star towards which I steer—"salus publica."' In truth, the public weal has ever been the Chancellor's highest law, and on this altar he has even sacrificed every political virtue, especially that of consistency, which the Prince, however, has often reprobated as a positive vice in any one claiming to be a true statesman. To swim with the times, to adapt himself to circumstances, to study the adaptability of means to end, to form allies where he could find them (as he once said when marching at the head of the Clericals), to make of rigid *doctrinaire* principles, dear to the professorial mind, the elastic occupants of a parliamentary Procrustes bed—such is the political philosophy taught us anew by the documentary milestones of Bismarck's progress as a social and economic reformer. Now a free trader, and to-morrow a protectionist; to-day the friend of trade freedom, and later on the advocate of guild-compulsion; at one time in favour of a tobacco monopoly, and at another the contented champion of a mere tobacco tax; alternately supporting or combating the idea of a Customs Union with Austria, according to the political and financial necessities and pro-

spects of the hour,—these are some of the contrasts and seeming contradictions which have moved the disciples of the ‘dreary science’ to sneer at its chief practitioner in Germany as an *ignoramus* and an *empiric*. It is true, as the Chancellor once said, that he began his public career without any ‘economic tendencies,’ by which he probably meant that he had never been much, or anything, of a bookish student of social theories; but some of the speeches which he delivered as early as 1848 and 1849, in the first approach to a Parliament enjoyed by Prussia (or rather, in his opinion, with which Prussia was cursed), show that Herr von Bismarck had already thought well and clearly on questions of taxation, trade guilds, banks, State finance, railways, and other kindred subjects. His opinions, however, were not those of the academic *doctrinaire*, but rather of the man who had already culled his theories from the green and vigorous tree of practical life. As the manager of his own country estates, he had acquired an insight into the principles of political economy which Adam Smith could never have altogether given him; while his genius for finance was of the same natural kind as made so capable a Chancellor of the Exchequer out of a jovial fox-hunting squire like Sir Robert Walpole.

The State Socialism, moreover, of the Chancellor is popularly supposed to be a plant of recent growth; but of this, too, we now see the roots reaching back to the very beginning of his career. Herr von Bismarck had not been at the helm of Prussian affairs for a year when we find him (March, 1863) addressing the then Minister of the Interior, Count Eulenburg, on the subject of provision for the aged and indigent among the working-classes. But it is noteworthy that at this time the Chancellor contented himself with contemplating provision of this kind from the point of view, not of State-help, but of self-help, his idea being to encourage the labourers themselves to lay up for their superannuation on something like the savings-bank system. It

was not till fourteen years later (August, 1877), when the Russians were crossing the Balkans, and when Europe supposed that Bismarck was wholly wrapped up in the issues of the great war, that we find him, in his rural solitude at Varzin, occupying himself with the Social Question in the form which it subsequently received in the celebrated Message of the old Emperor William (to the Reichstag, November 17, 1881), and which subsequently found its solution, so far, in the series of Sickness, Accident, Old Age and Indigence Assurance Laws that proclaimed the German Chancellor to be the greatest State Socialist of his time. Nor was he less entitled to be regarded as such in the light of the law passed (in 1886) by the Prussian Diet for solving the Polish Question,—a law which does not yet seem to have received the attention that it deserves from the friends of Ireland, and which Bismarck himself thus described :

‘ The Polish noblesse furnishes the wherewithal to carry on an anti-German agitation. In Posen they still possess about 650,000 hectares of land, which bring them in an average of about 15 marks per hectare in rent. Their total income, therefore, would represent about 3 per cent. on a loan of 100,000,000 marks ; and the question is, whether Prussia could expropriate the Polish nobility with that sum. If we expropriate for the sake of our railways, harbours, and fortresses, why should a State not also do so for its own security ? Full value would be given for the land, and perhaps the owners would be glad to buy elsewhere—say, in Galicia or Russian-Poland, or even to go and live in Paris or Monaco. Meanwhile, all we mean to do in this way is to acquire such Polish estates as may become free, and to farm them out to Germans, who pledge themselves to remain German, and, above all things, to marry German wives. The estates would be allotted to time tenants, who would, however, gradually become lords of the soil in from twenty-five to fifty years ; and the money for purchasing land in this way we should demand from you, the representatives of the Prussian people.’

It may be doubted whether Bismarck loves men, either individually or in the mass. His solicitude for the welfare of the masses savours less of the pure philanthropy of a Howard than of the calculating statesmanship of a Riche-

lieu. But though not much inclined to love men personally or in the bulk, his King, to him, was the impersonation of a principle which he adored as the only source of success and salvation to his country; and it was the passionate service of this monarchical principle, paradoxical though it may seem, that led him to embrace methods of social reform which, while democratic in their aim and character, nevertheless tend to make the State more omnipotent and despotic than ever. It has been said of Prince Bismarck that he must either assimilate or annihilate every new force that springs up near him. This rule certainly applies to all the men of talent who have arisen within the purview of his power—men, for example, like Count Harry Arnim and a hundred others, who, if they will not content themselves to serve, must prepare to be remorselessly suppressed. And the same rule even extends to the democratic forces of the time. ‘Are you to be master, or am I to be master?’ the Chancellor asks them, with a no less determined than significant look; and the answer, so far, is in the favour of the Prince, who has managed to assimilate the democracy of his time, by giving it almost as large a stake in the stability of the State as the Crown itself. In doing so he has transformed German society into something like a resemblance of the future-fancying picture presented to us in the ‘Looking Backward’ of Mr. Bellamy, where the State is everything and the individual nothing, and where even powerful and original personages like Prince Bismarck himself will be impossible. But there is one direction indicated by Mr. Bellamy in which the Prince has not yet made any appreciable progress, nor even hinted at the bare possibility of his doing so, and that is the conversion of Germany’s military forces into part of an industrial army—the abolition of soldiers, and the use of conscription, not in the defensive, but in the productive service of the State.

His country’s good, as he said when introducing his Protective Tariff, had always been his highest ideal, and ‘the

story of Robert Bruce and the spider would always serve to encourage him in the carrying out his task, whether he earned the love or hatred of his countrymen in so doing.' No one ever doubted that Bismarck's highest ideal was his country's good, but many objected to the means by which he strove to achieve it; and he had not long been out of office when the new rulers of Germany, under the conviction that the Ship of State, as guided by its old pilot, was following a wrong course, were quick to give it a new tack. The anti-Socialist Law, which, though repeatedly renewed and rigorously applied, had only served to swell the ranks of the Socialists to portentous proportions, was allowed to lapse; while the protectionist policy of the old Chancellor, which had also failed in bringing the full measure of the blessings expected of it, was considerably modified by the conclusion of new commercial treaties with some of Germany's nearest neighbours. In these two most important fields of policy, Prince Bismarck's wisdom had been fairly tried and found wanting; while, in another still more important respect, his acts of statecraft proved to be so wrong and pernicious that they had to be reversed even before he quitted the helm of power. These were the acts which provoked the 'Kulturkampf,' or war between Church and State, about which we must now say something.

The struggle between the principle represented by Church and State was as old as the hills—as old as the contest for power which Agamemnon waged with his seers at Aulis—as old as the mediæval conflicts between the Pope and the Kaisers, which nearly ruined the Reich; and what stirred it up afresh was the resurrection of that Reich with the simultaneous reassertion of Papal power and pretensions. Among his other surprising performances, Pius IX. had defined and declared the doctrine of Immaculate Conception; but the wire-pulling Jesuits had still a much more astounding feat in store for their Papal puppet. This was the summoning of an Œcumenical Council to meet in St. Peter's, Rome;

and by this Council the dogma of Papal Infallibility, with all its appendages, was ceremoniously proclaimed on the 18th July, 1870. On the following day the official declaration of war was handed to Germany by France.

Was this not, in truth, 'the appalling union of the infallibility of Heaven with the infernality of Hell'? The French Government was opposed to much of the Papal policy, just as the Pontiff was not in all respects in complete accord with the schemes of Louis Napoleon. But if anything is clear and incontestable it is this, that the war of 1870 was the resultant of nearly equal forces emanating from the Tuileries and the Vatican. While the Œcumenical Council sat, as indeed during the two previous years, the Pope made no secret of his conviction that a great international conflict would shortly be kindled in Central Europe. It would be a formidable ordeal, entailing immense suffering, but chastening the nations and restoring the moral balance of the world. France, who was then earnestly trying to gain Austria's support against Prussia, was in the Pope's opinion sure to take up arms as soon as possible, and might as surely be expected to be the victor. Heretic Germany crushed, and absolutism consolidated at Paris by military success, the day would have arrived for the head of an irresponsible Church to proceed from theory to action, and recover the ancient ascendancy of his predecessors. To be ready, therefore, for this grand opportunity, the Council was convened in the nick of time, and invested its originator with every authority calculated to strengthen his position and back his claim to universal sway. On went the war of which the Pope had dreamed, upsetting all the calculations of infallible foresight; and down came the Empire with a thundering, splinter-spreading crash. Victor Emmanuel's opportunity came. The French garrison was withdrawn from the Tiber, the Italian troops battered their way into long-coveted Rome, placed the coping-stone upon their country's unity, and abolished for ever the temporal power



of the Pope, who fondly fancied that the convulsions which he had helped to conjure up would restore him to the pinnacle of earthly glory.

Fully aware of the danger of Clerical hostility, the Chancellor was equally alive to the wisdom of reconciling the Vatican to the idea of the 'Evangelical Empire.' His own religious convictions had nothing to do whatever with his attitude to Rome, which was wholly shaped by considerations of statecraft. To the Prince, a Catholic would seem a much better man, a much worthier subject, than a Protestant, if more pliant to his political will. Knowing, therefore, that a third of the population of the Empire which had just been founded, and which required to be consolidated, owned the spiritual sway of the Pope, the Chancellor was most fain to avoid collision with His Holiness, and even tried to secure his favour. But the victorious German army had scarcely recrossed the Rhine when the Jesuits were up in arms against its work, and busy throwing up batteries both in and out of Parliament. The first session of the Reichstag was signalised by the formation of a new Catholic fraction, about whose attitude to the Empire the Government was not long in doubt. Calling itself the party of the Centre, and called by others that of the Clericals, Ultramontanes, or 'Blacks,' this fraction—consisting at first of over sixty members, mostly from South Germany, was organised and commanded by Dr. Windthorst, ex-Minister of the deposed King of Hanover, who had remained as irreconcilable as the Duke of Cumberland to the idea of his country's absorption by Prussia.

The Centre, commanded by Dr. Windthorst, soon showed its colours. In the debate on the address to the opening speech from the throne—which declared that Germany, devoted to her own domestic tasks, would pursue a policy of strict non-intervention abroad—the Clericals strongly objected to this national selfishness and insularity, averring that the interests of the Catholic population required, at

least, the diplomatic interference of the Empire in Italy on behalf of the Pope. In a brilliant historical survey, Herr von Bennigsen recalled the harrowing evils of mediæval Germany's relations to Italy, and induced Parliament by a sweeping majority to express 'the hope that, in the new-born Empire, the days of meddling with the internal affairs of other nations would never return, under any pretext or form.' ✓

Baulked inside Parliament, the Clericals endeavoured all the more to assert their ground outside it. At first the struggle was purely doctrinal. Shortly after returning home, the German bishops—who had at Rome most solemnly repudiated all share in the proceedings of the Council—suddenly changed their minds over night, and went over bag and baggage to the Papal camp. Reassembling in August (1871), beside the grave of St. Boniface,—English Winfried, converter of the heathen Teutons,—they now solemnly and unreservedly declared their acceptance of what the Infallible Church, in its capacity as teacher, had decided. The bishops themselves, it is clear, had only two available courses—either secession or surrender; leave the Church in obedience to their convictions, or bend the servile knee to it from motives of conscience. But there were still brave and upright minds in Germany who would not stoop to worship Baal. The spirit of Luther was by no means dead, and it manifested itself in the rise of the Old Catholic party, headed by scholars like Döllinger and Reinkens, who emphatically renounced the Vatican Decrees, adhering to what they deemed the pure and pristine constitution of the Church.

Heralded thus by a schism in the Church itself, the 'Kulturkampf' was begun by an attempt on the part of the recanting bishops to force their flocks to swallow the nauseous doctrinal food which they themselves had made a show of consuming. The dogma of Infallibility had not been long proclaimed, before the Archbishop of Cologne

demanded its recognition by the Theological Professors of Bonn, all paid servants of the State, on pain of suspension from their office. Appealing to the Government, they were told that they could not be disturbed in the exercise of their functions without its consent. This was the first exchange of outpost shots, and they were soon followed by clouds of Clerical skirmishers, who, emerging from their well-chosen cover, advanced with great persistency to the attack. The Jesuits became active political conspirators. The population of Poland and Alsace-Lorraine were taught to regard their annexation by Prussia as a great political crime, and to hope for a French war of revenge which would free them and their Church from a barbarous oppressor. From the pulpit the Catholic clergy denounced the Empire as hostile to the Church. The confessional and the school were made the assiduous instruments of Jesuit propaganda.

The State was more than patient, but at last it was forced to interfere, when a lay Catholic teacher of Braunsberg, in East Prussia, Dr. Wollmann, refused to teach his pupils the dogma of Infallibility, and was excommunicated by the Bishop of Ermeland. Now, be it noted that, though regarding the Vatican Doctrines as most dangerous to the State, the Government was tolerant enough not to object to their being taught in schools. All it meanwhile did was, in accordance with its principles of religious liberty, to protect from material harm such of its subjects and servants as, from scruples of conscience, could not see their way to do so. The Government, therefore, would not recognise the episcopal ban, and insisted on all his Catholic pupils receiving religious instruction, as before, from Dr. Wollmann—that being an obligatory subject in all Prussian schools. To this the bishop replied that, though the State had a share in the appointment of a Catholic teacher, the Church alone had power to teach, and that any opposition to this was interference in its domain of faith. This incident was the means of arousing the attention of the Government to the

real nature of the issues between Church and State, and to the imperative necessity of regulating their common frontiers.

Pending the elaboration of laws to this end, Bismarck abolished the Catholic Section in the Ministry of Public Worship, which, originally meant to represent and exercise the rights and duties of the State with respect to the Romish Church, had degenerated into a mere instrument for championing the Church *within* and *against* the State. This was a Prussian act. The next measure against the Church emanated from the Empire. The first Reichstag had been to a certain extent packed by South German priests. They had terrorised the electors. They had denounced the return of a Protestant candidate as a sin against the Church; they had commanded their congregations to vote for so and so; in fact, they had converted their pulpits into platforms, and their confessionals into witness-boxes. To counteract what had already happened, Parliament quashed the return of several of its Ultramontane members; and, to obviate the recurrence of such scandalous practices as had sent them to Berlin, it passed a law making it penal for clergymen to incite to riot, or otherwise endanger the peace.

Bismarck, on the other hand, was not long after this in advancing his guns on behalf of Prussia. In January, 1872, Herr von Mühler, Minister of Public Worship, resigned, and Dr. Falk was appointed in his stead. In Dr. Falk, Bismarck found the very man he wanted, and he whose name has been given to most of the anti-Papal legislation of the next seven years accepted office on the understanding that his own independent views fitted him to be the ready instrument of his master's will. To that will he was at once required to give expression, and he began his remedial measures by going to the root of a great public evil. He knew that whoever has the youth of a nation in his hands also has its future, and, accordingly, the Prussian Parliament

was asked to pass a law placing the inspection of all public and private schools entirely in the hands of the State. The Clericals and their allies, of course, raised a vehement outcry against the measure as heralding the era of irreligion, the end of the world, and all the rest of it. But their arguments were worthless in view of the fact, that the new law left intact that article of the Constitution guaranteeing confessional teaching in primary schools. Bismarck spoke effectively on the subject in both Chambers, alluding to the Ultramontanes as having 'mobilised against the State.' 'Proofs, proofs!' exclaimed Windthorst. '*Ach, meine Herren*, look for them in your own breasts!' The Catholic bishops had made desperate, but unavailing, efforts to wreck the measure, and at last they wrote to all their clergy, bidding them, in substance, to remain at their scholastic posts as hitherto, nor quit them without the approval of their ecclesiastical superiors.

Thus the storm gathered, and the thunder-clouds grew blacker still when the Pope declined to receive Cardinal Prince Hohenlohe as the representative of the Empire. 'Such an appointment,' wrote Bismarck, 'would give a fresh proof of our earnest endeavour to live in peace with the Church, since it must be plain to every unprejudiced mind that a Cardinal would never let himself become an instrument of hostility against the Pope;' while the loyalty with which, as German prelate, he had hitherto stood aloof from the Jesuits and the aggressive party in the Church, was a guarantee that he would not compromise the interests of the State. It was probably for the latter reason that the Pope refused to receive him. 'What would you say,' asked Windthorst, 'if the Pope were to make the Adjutant-General of the Emperor his Nuntius?' It was generally felt that the Emperor, who had never before suffered such a rebuff, had been grievously affronted, and the feeling of bitterness against the Clericals was intensified. In the Reichstag even it was urged that all diplomatic negotiations with

the Vatican should now be broken off. But Bismarck counselled patience. Concordats were entirely out of the question on the basis of the Vatican Dogmas, but diplomacy might still be of some avail till legislation brought relief. As for the claims of the Catholic clergy to be exempted from the binding force of certain statutes, Bismarck assured Parliament that he would use every means at his disposal to maintain the full and undivided sovereignty of the law. It was on this occasion that he uttered the famous words which found a ready echo all over the nation: 'Have no fear; we shall never go to Canossa, either in body or in spirit.'<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the operations of the Jesuits in Germany were not overlooked. As early as September, 1871, the Old Catholics had expressed the conviction that peace between Church and State was impossible as long as this religious Order was allowed to continue 'its corrupting and pernicious activity.' A month later, the celebrated jurist, Professor Bluntschli, set in motion the machinery of agitation, by declaring that 'a Diet of Protestants at Darmstadt had resolved to take up with all energy the struggle against the Jesuits, and carry it on till they were driven out of the German Empire.' Apprised of what was passing, both the Pope and the Prussian bishops issued testimonials of a most flattering kind in favour of the misunderstood followers of Loyola. But thousands of petitions for their expulsion began to pour in to Parliament from all parts of Germany. On the other hand, 'two hundred-weight' of Catholic signatures were collected in their favour. The Committee appointed to consider these addresses found

<sup>1</sup> Several years later, a public monument—bearing the Prince's portrait in relief, with the commemorative words, '*Nach Canossa gehen wir nicht*'—was erected on the peak of the Harz-hill where formerly towered the castle of that German Kaiser who knelt in degrading penitence at the feet of the Pope of Rome; and where, curiously enough, Bismarck himself had asked the hand of his wife.

in them a clear *à priori* case against the Order, and begged the Chancellor to act. On the 14th of June the anti-Jesuit Law was introduced into Parliament, and on the 4th of July it received the Imperial assent at Ems—historic Ems. There speedily followed a series of ministerial rescripts excluding the Jesuits from all priestly and scholastic functions whatever, while a year later their affiliated Orders were included in the general ban. Within six months after promulgation of these edicts, the proscribed servants of the Church were as scarce in Germany as wolves or as wild boars in Great Britain; though it was said that the Jesuits had left the Empire like foxes, and would return like eagles.

A few days after the passing of the Jesuit Bill, the Pope, replying to the address of some German Catholics in Rome, poured out all the vials of his pent-up wrath on the head of the sinful Chancellor. He painted him in the colours of a Protestant Philip II., told his hearers that they were only bound to obey their country's laws when not in conflict with those of God and the Church, and bade them be of good cheer, for that 'a stone would yet come rolling down the Hill (of Zion) and bruise the foot of the (Imperial) Colossus!' In France, the Press beheld with malicious glee the progress of the plot, and wrote of Bismarck as having at last found his match in a Spiritual Power which would be an ally of the Republic in the coming war of revenge.

Meanwhile the soldiers of the Pope in Germany were growing ever more aggressive, and one of the boldest of these, the Catholic Chaplain-General of the Forces, was punished by the total abolition of his office. About the same time Cologne and its neighbourhood became the scene of another serious and cardinal conflict of authority. Careless of warning from the Government, Archbishop Melchers again summoned four Old Catholic professors of Bonn to subscribe to the Vatican Decrees, on pain of

'greater ban.' They refused, and the threatened blow fell—in despite of a clear and emphatic Prussian law that no one should be excluded from any religious community without the previous assent of the State, when such exclusion involved detriment to his honour and existence. The Government, therefore, refused compliance with the Archbishop's request to dismiss the obnoxious professors, and all the persecuting prelate could do was to interdict attendance on their lectures. For contumacy of a worse kind the Bishop of Ermeland was deprived of his pay.

In the Clerical camp this latter measure acted like a hundred bombs. The expulsion of the Jesuits, with the treatment of their colleague of Ermeland, had exasperated beyond measure the German bishops, and back again they flew to Fulda. The outcome of their confabulations was a long and elaborate memorial on the state of the Church, which they sent to all the German Governments, and which, in point of fact, was nothing but a downright declaration of war. It clearly proved that, despite their previous recalcitrancy, the German bishops had now become the willing thralls of the Pope. The document denounced, and encouraged resistance to, all the anti-Papal measures hitherto taken by the State; and it set forth the Divine rights and doctrines (dangerous to the civil power in the highest degree) to which the Church would continue to cling, come what might.

With the year 1872, one of the acts of the engrossing drama, 'Pope or Kaiser?' ended with a fine spectacular scene. The curtain dropped on the Papal Olympus with angry lightnings playing round its top. During the past few months the mitred Jove had not been sparing of his thunderbolts against the impious Titan who had dared to assail his heaven of Dogmas. We have seen how he prophesied the descent of a stone from the Hill of Zion that would 'bruise the foot of the Imperial Colossus.' He had also sneered at the meeting of the three Emperors as a



'merely human Areopagus,' 'whereof one member was a declared enemy of the Church.' But these were the mere mutterings of his wrath preceding the outburst of its storm. Addressing a Consistory of two-and-twenty Cardinals, the Pope referred to the cruel persecutions in the German Empire, where 'force and fraud' were equally used to annihilate the Church, and to the 'unabashed impudence' with which it was asserted that the Catholics themselves were to blame for the action of the Government. To these abusive words the object of their fury at once replied by a significant act. The German Chargé d'Affaires was recalled from Rome. On the very day he left, the Pope received a telegram from 'the Catholics of Germany,' expressing their deep gratitude for the terms of his abusive allocution.

The whole nation was stirred with strife. 'Hi-Guelph!' 'Hi-Ghibelline!' again resounded from opposing ranks, as in the days of the Hohenstaufens. All Europe looked on. Reduced to its narrowest limits, the issue between the combatants was clear. All the arguments ever used, now or afterwards, by the Clericals may be condensed in the words of the noble lord who, prompted by Cardinal Manning, once exclaimed that he was 'an Englishman, if you please, but a Catholic first.' The simple converse of this political theory, and nothing more, was enunciated in detail by Dr. Falk with respect to Prussia and the four measures which he now introduced into the Diet. The Ultramontanes cried out that these laws would violate the Constitution of the country, outrage the conscience of all its Catholic inhabitants, destroy the Divine institutions, and frustrate the functions of the Church. They were told, in reply, that the Church had room enough left, if it liked, to perform its proper task—'the perfecting of man in the sight of God.' And Dr. Falk's Bills—without which General von Roon declared the country 'could not live,' together with a Bill for altering the Constitution in conformity therewith—were

finally approved (1st May, 1873), and a fortnight later were promulgated as part of the statute law of Prussia, which every citizen, lay and clerical, was bound at his peril to obey.<sup>1</sup>

But the bishops were not at all of this mind. They hastened to inform the Ministry that they could on no account encourage observance of the laws just made, which violated the principles whereby all Christian peoples, since the time of Constantine the Great, had regulated the relations between Church and State; and that, in fact, they were firmly minded to resort to passive resistance. At this juncture the infuriated Pope wrote to the Emperor, complaining of these harsh enactments against the Church, 'which was only calculated to undermine His Majesty's throne;' to which the Emperor, with Bismarck at his elbow, bluntly replied that His Majesty was firmly resolved to preserve peace and order in his dominions from the 'State-imperilling' machinations of ecclesiastical rebels, 'with whose aims the religion of Jesus Christ had nothing whatever to do.'

True to their word, the Catholic clergy acted in scornful defiance of the May Laws. In particular, the bishops continued to instal priests without giving the previous statutory notice to the Government. The consequence was that Dr. Falk's directions to strike and spare not were obeyed to the letter. All such appointments, all the official acts of such nominees, christenings, marriages, and even burials, were declared invalid before the law. The Church books and seals of parishes thus irregularly held were impounded, and, to crown all, Count Ledochovsky, Archbishop of Gnesen and Posen, after repeated acts of contumacy, was

<sup>1</sup> Strictly speaking, these were only the kernel of the May or Falk Laws. In the same month of the following year, other similar enactments were passed; and the term, indeed, has now come to be applied generally to the whole series of anti-Papal measures passed during the ministry of Dr. Falk, 1872-79.

arrested and sent to gaol. Relying on the accession to their parliamentary ranks resulting from a new election, the Clericals thought to assert their newly-acquired strength by demanding the abrogation of the May Laws; but their motion was rejected by an overwhelming vote, and replied to by a Bill for making civil marriage compulsory, as the necessary complement of the May Laws. The Government had already refused to recognise the appointment, and consequently the official acts, of clergymen installed in defiance of one of these laws; so it followed that many Catholics began to pass for married in the eye of the Church, but not in the eye of the State.

To obviate, therefore, the dreadful social confusion thus occasioned, the latter was bound to intervene in the only possible way—by basing the validity of the wedding-tie on a civil contract instead of on an ecclesiastical ceremony, and by also transferring the registration of births and burials from the Church to the State. For it also resulted that entries and extracts of such domestic events, made by illegally appointed clergymen, were not entitled to public credit. The religious aspect of the question was still viewed by the Chancellor in much the same light as it had been a quarter of a century before, when, as an orthodox Junker, he pleaded with such pious eloquence against the institution of civil marriage. The inconsistency, of course, between his opinions then and his action now did not escape bitter attack; but he had never, he said, acted like the false mother in the tale of Solomon's Judgment, insisting on having his will even though the State should be rent asunder in consequence. He was neither too proud nor too obstinate to learn, and adapt his views to altered circumstances. It was an honour to him to have made so many enemies in the service of his country, and he was proud to think that from 'the Garonne to the Vistula, and from the Baltic to the Tiber, he was at that moment the best-hated man in all Europe.'

Nowhere was that hatred more intense than among the Catholics of France, for, to dislike of the man who had destroyed the Empire, they now added detestation of the Power which had dethroned the Pope. On the other hand, the great mass of the British people, ever on the side of law and freedom, heartily sympathised with the Chancellor in his efforts to break the enthralling power of Rome. There might have been two opinions about the propriety of his means, but there was only one as to the praiseworthiness of his end. Strongly supported at home, and sympathised with abroad, the Government did not hesitate or look back on the path it had entered. On meeting in January, the Prussian Parliament, as in the previous year, passed two fresh measures of defence against the Romish Church, both of a very harsh and penal character, but they were the necessary and logical complement to the enactments of the previous year, and it was clear that they would never need to be enforced if the latter were obeyed.

About the same time, a third and much more severe measure was added by the Imperial Parliament to this new series of Prussian May Laws,—a measure which declared, in substance, that any clergyman who ignored the sentence of a court deposing him, might, according to the gravity of his offence, either be expelled from any particular district, or forfeit all his subject-rights, and be banished from the territory of the Empire. There was truth in the remark of Herr Windthorst, that the next stage in the policy of repression thus pursued would have to be marked by the guillotine. The extreme severity of the new enactment was increased by the fact that, though primarily meant to complete the ecclesiastical legislation of Prussia, it applied to all the Empire, and thus entailed on rebellious subjects of the Prussian Crown the loss of their whole German Fatherland. The new laws were applied with rigour. But severity on one side was surpassed by obstinacy on the other, and the conflict grew hot and fierce.

Overstrained by the exertions of the 'Kulturkampf, Prince Bismarck had fallen ill, and in July (1874) he repaired to Kissingen to take the waters. It was the thirteenth of that month, the anniversary of the momentous 'day of Ems,' and the Prince, as was his afternoon wont, had gone out for a drive. The promenade was crowded with fashionable visitors, ever eager to see and cheer the great Chancellor. His carriage had not advanced far, when a mean-looking fellow darted from the throng, and, taking deliberate aim, fired a one-barrelled pistol straight at the Prince's head. The Prince was in the act of returning the salutations of the public, and the bullet of the assassin passed between his right hand and his temples, grazing his wrist, and all but opening a pulse-vein. The quiet little watering-place was speedily thrown into a state of frenzy. After a desperate struggle to escape, the would-be murderer was seized and haled away to prison by the furious crowd, which could hardly be kept from lynching him. The Prince himself, after driving through the town to show that he was unscathed, went and confronted the criminal, who turned out to be a Catholic journeyman-cooper, named Kullmann, aged twenty-one, all the way from Magdeburg.

Questioned by the Prince as to why he wanted to murder him, Kullmann frankly avowed that it was on account of the Church Laws, the imprisonment of the bishops, and the fact that the Chancellor had insulted 'his fraction' (the Centre). The germ of his resolution to take off the Prince was traced to the time when, in the previous year, he had joined a Catholic Society at Salzwedel, read its polemic literature, and listened to the inflammatory harangues of a priest. There was nothing, it is true, to show that a Jesuit priest had made as clear a bargain with Kullmann as Macbeth did with the murderers of Banquo. But there was undoubted truth in the statement of a Government print, that 'the dark and passionate threatening' of the Ultramontane Press, with other things which

have come to light, give good ground for the belief that the hands which armed Ravaillac and Gérard, the assassins of Henry the Fourth and William of Orange, also loaded Kullmann's pistol.' Speaking on the subject in the Reichstag, the Prince solemnly assured the House that the assassin, whom he had interviewed himself, was in no wise half-witted, but in the full possession of all his faculties, and the self-avowed champion of the Clerical cause. 'Yes, gentlemen,' he said to the Clericals, with a terrible look, 'you may push away the man from you as you like, but he himself clings tightly to your coat-tails.' The '*attentat*' of Kullmann acted like oil on the flames of controversial strife between Church and State, and up they leaped again with tenfold force.

Blow followed upon blow in quick and pitiless succession, and when Parliament met the Chancellor announced the withdrawal of the Imperial Mission from the Curia. His resolution had been sudden. When first laid before Parliament, the Budget had contained the usual charge for the salary of the German Minister at the Vatican; but lo! when the estimates now came on for debate, the item had disappeared. The 'Blacks' were beside themselves. But their leader had speech enough left to compare this new attack on the Romish Church to the vain assaults of the Titans against the gods. In less than a week from this time, Dr. Majunké, priest, and editor of the Ultramontane *Germania*, was seized and sent to gaol on the strength of a sentence of a year's imprisonment for libelling the Government. On the second day after Kullmann's murderous attempt, the authorities had been ordered to deal with the Catholic Press, and with propagandist societies under the influence of the Jesuits, according to the utmost rigour of the law; and Majunké was one of the first and most conspicuous victims of this policy of vigilance and repression. He was found guilty, but eluded immediate arrest, and, relying on the fancied immunity of deputies, returned to

take his seat in the Reichstag. In these circumstances his imprisonment provoked an acrimonious debate in Parliament, which passed a resolution intended 'to obviate the possibility of any deputy being again arrested during the session, without the sanction of the House.' One Ultramontane print exultingly declared, that 'on a snowy winter day Bismarck had found his first Canossa on his bare and penitent knees before Majunké, in the castle court of Plötzensee' (the Holloway Prison of Berlin); and, taking the incident to heart, the Chancellor resigned. But the Emperor bade him put his resignation back into his pocket, and be of good cheer; while the Reichstag itself hastened to pass an overwhelming vote of confidence in the disheartened Chancellor, whose great and ever more apparent merits Herr von Bennigsen warmly eulogised. Radiant with fresh confidence and hope, the Prince, in full uniform, hastened from the Palace to the House of Parliament, where he cordially shook hands with its President, and with his Liberal champion, Bennigsen.

Meanwhile the Bishop of Paderborn, who had already been imprisoned, was deposed from office; the law for making civil marriage in Prussia compulsory was merged in one for the whole Empire; and the thunderbolt which the Papal Jove had been wrathfully forging was now launched in the shape of the famous Encyclica of 5th February, 1875. In this fulmination, Pius IX. stormed at the 'godless' chiefs of the Empire, and their policy of 'brute force'; he lauded the conduct of the rebellious bishops; and he solemnly declared to the whole Catholic world that the May Laws, as infringing the Divine constitution of the Church, were 'null and void,' and of no binding force on any of its members. This was surely an attempt with a vengeance to establish *imperium in imperio*. Well might the official Press of Prussia write that the action of the Pope himself now clearly confirmed the words of the Nuntius Meglia, that the Catholic Church, if need be,

would seek the aid of revolution. On the other hand, the tone of the Clerical journals became more daring and defiant than ever. 'Many a one,' wrote the *Germania*, in comparing Kullmann's deed with the acts of the Imperial Government,—'many a one who drove the murderous steel, or winged the deadly lead, will seem morally purer, and fare better before the judgment-seat of God, than those assassins of truth, innocence, and honour.'

The Pope had spoken; Prince Bismarck would act. He would show by one crowning proof who was sovereign in Prussia. Within a month, therefore, from the appearance of the Encyclica, the Chamber was asked to pass a measure popularly called the 'Bread-Basket Law.' Directed against ecclesiastical rebels, not only *in esse* but also *in posse*, it declared, in substance, that thenceforth all payments hitherto made by the State to the Catholic Church would cease, but be resumed as soon as ever the clergy thus deprived of their regular incomes should give a written promise of unconditional obedience to all the laws of the realm. The Government-grants to the Church of Rome were mainly drawn from the secularised properties of the latter, and were guaranteed under certain conditions by a royal sanction of the Bull *De Salute Animarum*, a diplomatic achievement of the historian Niebuhr. But these conditions, it was now clear, had been flagrantly broken; and so it was equally the right and the duty of the State not to salary opposition to its laws.

The new measure was not passed without desperate opposition on the part of the Clericals. They argued that the stoppage of their pay was a high-handed breach of treaty rights. Dr. Windthorst accused the Chancellor of not knowing law enough to enable him to pass an ordinary examination. The Prince was willing to admit his comparative ignorance of jurisprudence, but claimed 'to know the will of God better than any of them.' He was quite ready to 'obey God rather than man,' but he believed he did so



in 'serving a King by God's grace in the interests of the public weal.' The law in question would probably not have the desired effect; it might not force the foe to surrender; the clergy would doubtless be more richly salaried by private charity. But the State was bent on doing its duty. 'Acting "with God for King and country," it was resolved to stand up for the freedom of the German nation against the machinations of the Jesuits and the Pope.' The Clericals still cried out that all these measures violated the Constitution, and the answer to these complaints was as sweeping as it was simple. Liberals who had championed, and reactionaries who had opposed the Constitution, now combined to blot out, as with a brush, those of its articles which the Church had hitherto regarded as the sacred charter of its independence. An important breach in the fortifications of the State was thus built up, and Bismarck declared that, not until all the remaining gaps in his line of defence had been similarly filled, would he think for a moment of holding parley with the besiegers.

But to the filling up of these gaps he at once proceeded. They were three in number, and in each he respectively placed a remedial measure: one, called the 'Cloister Law,' dissolving and expelling from Prussia all religious Orders whatever, save purely Samaritan ones; another, entrusting the administration of Church property in Catholic parishes partly to the congregations themselves, partly to the State; and a third, securing to Old Catholics the continued use and enjoyment of churches and Church funds, of which the bishops, treating them as damnable heretics, had endeavoured to deprive them. The Bread-Basket and the Cloister Laws were well described as a strategic whole, one being meant to cut the enemy off from his commissariat supplies, the other to rob him of the bulk of his troops. The Jesuits and their kindred Orders had already been packed out of the country; but what did this avail, if the nine thousand other confederated agents of the Pope left behind continued

their revolutionary work with redoubled zeal! There was nothing for it, in the opinion of the Government, but to act on the advice of John Knox, and drive away the rooks by destroying their nests.

Such, then, is a general account of the famous series of legislative bulwarks thrown up around Prussia and the Empire against the political encroachments of the Church of Rome. For four years the activity of the Prussian Legislature had been mainly directed to the task of constructing entrenchments around the State, and its lines of defence were now complete. Secure behind its fortifications of law, the civil power could now calmly await ecclesiastical assault. Incessantly still did the sable-uniformed troops of Rome come on with vehement rush and rousing cheer, but each time they were repulsed and mowed down by pitiless marksmen behind impregnable parapets. The State made no more sallies; it was content to maintain an attitude of strict defence; and from the spring of 1875 to the spring of 1878—when the death of the Papal commander-in-chief induced his army to make overtures for peace—the history of the ‘Kulturkampf’ is but a tale of the massacre which more than decimated the ranks of the Romish host, in its desperate but vain attempts to recover the positions from which it had been expelled.

How shall we describe the troubles that now overtook the Catholics in Prussia—troubles which they themselves compared with the persecution of the early Christians by Diocletian? Schools and seminaries were closed; chairs of theology were left vacant; hundreds of parishes were deprived of their spiritual overseers, while the latter were robbed of their own material support. The Catholic Press was rigorously dealt with; Church processions were controlled by the police. Deserted cloisters and other religious establishments began to dot the land, as if a despoiling enemy had passed over it. The servants of the Church were fined, imprisoned, and banished without mercy. Epis-

copal palaces were broken into, and their inmates pursued, with warrant of arrest and hue and cry, like thieves and murderers. Tumults broke out in churches; God's acres were profaned by strife. The crucifix, which, in the age of chivalry and belief, so often shielded fugitives from the sword of the awed pursuer, had no preventive terror for the merciless law-officers of a State in which Christianity had long ceased to be the vital power of old. Priests were torn away from the very altar, from the bedside even of death, and from the grave, and flung into prison like common felons, or hustled across the frontier like lepers. 'For conscience' sake!' shouted one side; 'Sovereignty of the law!' was inscribed on the banners of the other. The struggle was watched with intense interest by the whole civilised world, for the issues were vast and momentous.

Would the policy of 'blood and iron,' which had made Germany strong, also succeed in breaking the spirit of Rome? How long was the country to be troubled and torn by this domestic strife? There was truth in the words of Pius IX., that 'these (Catholic) Germans stood firm as oaks.' But what of that, if their rulers remained inflexible as iron? Would the oak yield, or the edge of the metal be turned? Signs, at least, began to appear that the wielders of the metal were getting tired of trying to rive a substance so unimpressionable to blows. Had the sapient rulers of the Prussian nation, then, gone the right way to work? Had the Chancellor, who had claimed the merit of something very like unerring wisdom for all his past public acts, given further proof of his own infallibility in the way he sought to combat pretensions similar to his own? Many began to doubt it.

That certain provisions of the May Laws were unnecessarily harsh and oppressive, Bismarck was the first to admit, after the fury of the conflict had abated. Like a wise statesman, therefore, he was not, perhaps, disinclined to humour the foe by abandoning such of the less salient

angles of his defences as were unessential to the impregnability of his citadel. But he vowed that this was the utmost concession he would make. He had himself declared that, 'as soon as the breach' (made by the Clericals) 'had been built up,' it would be his most earnest endeavour to make peace with the Centre, and especially with the Curia. And as the conflict went on, his desire in this respect became more ardent. The May Laws were producing no positive results. The Clericals had extended to the Empire the struggle whose proper arena was Prussia. In the Reichstag, the Centre party, numbering about a fourth of the whole House, was implacably opposed to the Government. No matter what measure Prince Bismarck brought forward, it was sure to be gainsaid by Dr. Windthorst and his devoted band of 'Blacks,' who were bent, at least, on wreaking revenge, if they could not wrest concessions. This factious opposition by the Clericals was a matter of indifference to the Chancellor, when otherwise sure of sufficient support; but this was not always the case, and he found it impossible to go on without the assurance of a steady majority. The National Liberals, who had hitherto been his mainstay, now began to betray a spirit of schism and disaffection, and could no longer be relied on. The Conservatives would remain true to him; but a trustworthy majority was only to be attained by their alliance with one of the other two main fractions, the Centre or the National Liberals. The latter proffered their continued support, in return for measures which the Chancellor deemed inconsistent with the strength and stability of the Empire; while the Clericals were willing to serve him in a Conservative sense, in exchange for a modification of the May Laws.

In 1878, Pio Nono was succeeded by Leo XIII., and it was admitted on all sides that the new Pope did his best to conciliate the Chancellor. The language of the Vatican about Germany was now respectful, and even flattering. There was no more heard about 'stones that would crush

the foot of the Imperial Colossus,' about the 'unabashed impudence' of the Church's persecutors, about 'anti-Christian Diocletians' and 'modern Attilas.' Both sides continued to vie with each other in their professions of peace, but no real progress was made in the desired direction. While the Curia demanded everything of the State and offered nothing in return, Bismarck showed a firm resolve to adhere to the basis of action laid down by the Crown Prince, who, when acting as Regent pending the recovery of his father from the buckshot of Dr. Nobiling, had written to the Pope that the principles of the May Laws must under all circumstances remain intact, but that there was room enough for agreement and compromise in the field of practice.

Meanwhile, the Chancellor's Protective Tariff was laid before the Reichstag (1879), and its approval or rejection depended entirely on the Centre. The Clericals mainly represented industrial, and therefore Protectionist districts, and that was one reason why they should range themselves for once on the side of Government. But an additional inducement for their doing so was the hope that they might thus tend to facilitate the peace negotiations between Berlin and Rome, and place the Chancellor before the alternative of either granting them solid counter-concessions, or forfeiting their future parliamentary support. It was not the business of Prince Bismarck to undeceive the Clericals on the former score, but he privately informed his friends that he would never pay his Clerical allies with 'Canossa coins.'

Nevertheless the tide had now turned, and its ebbing course was further indicated by the retirement of Dr. Falk (July, 1879). Every one knew what this meant. What the Chancellor now wanted was not a Minister of combat, but of conciliation; and such a Minister he found in Herr von Puttkamer, a kinsman of his own. Without forsaking the broad general principles by which his predecessor had been guided, Herr von Puttkamer took every opportunity of

tempering with mercy, and even indulgence, their particular application. Dr. Falk was as liberal in his theology as he had been rigorous in his law. Herr von Puttkamer, on the other hand, belonged to that extreme orthodox sect of which the Emperor had always been a most devout adherent. Like Augustus, therefore, who implored Varus to give him back his legions, the pious Kaiser besought his Ministry to restore to his people that religion which the crimes of Hödel and Nobiling convinced him was fast losing its power.

Guided, therefore, no less by the piety of his Imperial master than by his own political and parliamentary necessities, Bismarck now again made a serious and sustained attempt to come to terms with Rome; but, after two years of hopeful negotiations, these were suddenly broken off precisely where they began. Folly on one side, and firmness on the other, had stood in the way of their success. The result was calculated to discourage Bismarck, but it is the business of the statesman to take account of existing facts. The 'Kulturkampf' had created a state of things which loudly called for relief, and that the Pope had proved himself to be graspingly unwise, was no reason why the Chancellor should show himself to be spitefully unpatriotic. Accordingly he intimated that, in spite of the unyielding attitude of Rome, a Bill for enabling the Prussian Government to administer certain of the May Laws at discretion would be laid before Parliament.

The Landtag met (May, 1880), and proceeded to discuss the promised Bill, the debates on the subject being extremely passionate. From the correspondence between Berlin and the Vatican now published the country saw what the Pope wanted, and what Bismarck was willing to give. Rome, it was seen, had indeed stretched out her hand, but only to take, and not to give; though Dr. Windthorst made bold to affirm that 'the spirit of conciliation shown by the Pope might almost justify the statement that His Holiness himself had gone to Canossa.' The Discre-

tionary Powers (or Dispensing) Bill went into battle with eleven clauses, and came out of it with only seven. Great was the manœuvring and chaffering of parties. The lobbies of Parliament resembled an auction-room or an exchange. The result was mere chance-work. The practical effect of this torso Act—which only passed the Lower Chamber by a majority of five—was that it conferred on the Government powers of limited duration to provide for the cure of souls without exacting rigorous observance of the May Laws. The Clericals argued that it was due entirely to party motives; the Chancellor averred its aim to be purely patriotic. Part of both statements may be combined to express the truth. In any case, it was a frank confession that the May Laws, as hitherto administered, had altogether failed of their object. It was a proof that the power of Rome was still much more dread and indomitable than her overweening adversary had imagined; and it clearly showed that the political wisdom which had made bold to oppose itself to the claims of Papal Infallibility was in itself far from perfect.

That the Prussian Government had at least lowered its flag, if not struck it,—that flag, inscribed with ‘No compromise,’ which had so long led on the anti-Papalists to battle,—could no longer be doubted, when, in the spring of 1882, Herr von Schlözer delivered to the Pope his credentials as Prussian Minister. He was the very man for the post, and the German Clericals raised a shout of ‘*Habemus legatum*’ when he was sent as the messenger of conciliation to the Eternal City. Diplomatic negotiations between the Empire and the Vatican had been broken off, as we saw, in 1874; and, as far as the Empire itself was concerned, they were not now restored, for Herr von Schlözer only went to Rome as Prussian Minister; but his presence at the Curia was a proof that the Chancellor had begun a formal parley with his Papal foes.

This was an advance of a merely formal kind on the part

of Prussia, but it was soon followed by a substantial enough concession, in the shape of another law prolonging the Discretionary Full-Powers Act, while adding considerably to the dispensing faculty of the Emperor-King. This new law, of course, was not passed without the usual party conflict and compromise. But though the rules with respect to the education and training of the clergy were now relaxed, and power given to the Crown to reinstate evicted bishops, the May Laws themselves were nevertheless all but left intact. Nevertheless, the Clericals were anything but satisfied with the concessions that had been made them, and the insatiable demands of Dr. Windthorst were only an echo of the claims put forward by the Vatican. What the Vatican wanted was complete organic revision, if not repeal, of the May Laws. The main object of the Government in binding the Church to notify clerical nominations (*Anzeigepflicht*)—the keystone of all Dr. Falk's legislation—was to enable it to veto the appointment of such candidates as had been educated in principles avowedly hostile to the State; and now the Church, after some further correspondence on the subject, came forward with an offer to tolerate the existence of the arch provided the keystone were taken out.

At last the Chancellor gave the Curia the alternative of coming to a friendly understanding with the Government by means of private negotiations, or of submitting to see Prussia again resort to independent legislation, for the purpose of restoring to her Catholic subjects the highest measure of ecclesiastical freedom consistent with the civil supremacy of the State. But the Curia rejected this ultimatum, and the speedy consequence was another Falk-Law Amendment Act,—that of 11th July, 1883,—which restricted the 'pre-intimation duty' of the Church to the most indispensable limits, curtailed the competence of the Court for Ecclesiastical Causes, and extended penal immunity for clerical offences. Prussia had thus made another most substantial concession to the Curia. Would



the Curia respond to it with a counter-step? A tolerable *modus vivendi* had thus been placed within the reach of the Vatican, and Bismarck waited to see whether the Holy Father was animated with the spirit of compromise or of 'no surrender.' For some time it seemed as if the Vatican was exclusively under the influence of the latter feeling, but wiser counsels at last prevailed. Soon after the passing of the second July Law (the two chief Falk-Law Amendment Acts are known as the 'July Laws'), Herr von Gossler—who had (in 1881) succeeded Herr von Puttkamer as Minister of Public Worship, with the same conciliatory task—invited the Prussian bishops to appeal to the State for the exercise of those 'dispensing powers' which had now been created for their benefit. The responsive attitude of the Church was rewarded by the State with further concessions; and, towards the end of the year 1883, most sees had been reprovided with pardoned bishops, and re-endowed with the means of salarizing them.

From this time on to Prince Bismarck's retirement from office, the history of the 'Kulturkampf' is nothing but the chronicle of concessions from the State to the Church. '*Rückwärts, rückwärts, Don Rodrigo!*' ever remained the watchword of imperious Rome; and backwards, ever backwards, fell her German antagonists, dropping their weapons and surrendering as they went. 'To restore the *status quo* as it existed in the time of Frederick William IV., and as it was confirmed at Königsberg' (on his coronation) 'by William I.—with that we should be content . . . but only with that; and the schools must be reorganised on the basis of the pre-Falk era.' Such was the ultimatum sent by Dr. Windthorst to the camp of the anti-Papalists, and the latter had come to see that they had no choice but compliance with most of his demands—bit by bit, it might be, for the sake of appearances, but compliance all the same. The voice of Catholic Germany—more than a third of the whole Empire—was loud and inexorable; the parlia-

mentary needs of the Chancellor had grown paramount; it had become as expedient for the State to conclude an alliance with the Church for the purpose of combating Socialism and Revolution—Germany's internal foes—as it had been necessary for it to enter into a written pact with Austria and Italy with the view of fending off attack from without; and, last of all, the old Emperor—now verging towards his end—had said that he could only die happy if he died at peace with his Catholic subjects.

It was thus clear that, if the ship of State was to weather the storms looming up ahead, it must be unballasted of its May Laws, and one by one accordingly they were thrown overboard till little remained of them but the *Anzeigepflicht*, the power of the State to veto ecclesiastical appointments, and a few other formal checks on the absolutism of the Church in the field of civil allegiance. The interview between the German Crown Prince and the Pope, on the occasion of the former's visit to the King of Italy (in 1883), was an outward proof of the process of reconciliation which had set in, and which received more significant manifestation still three years later, when Bismarck, acting on one of the happiest inspirations that ever guided him, paid Leo XIII. the compliment of invoking his arbitration in the dispute between Spain and Germany as to the Caroline Islands—an act of astute statesmanship which carried with it an exchange of high decorations between Rome and Berlin, the Pope being honoured with the Black Eagle and Bismarck with the Order of Christ.

This was another striking proof, indeed, that wonders would never cease; but what was the astonishment of all men, when, a year later, the Pope—in consideration no less of past than of future concessions to him on the part of Bismarck—threw the whole weight of his personal authority into the scale of the general election of 1877 in favour of the new Army (Septennate) Bill, which had been the means of dissolving Parliament and dividing the nation.

In compliance with the wish of Bismarck, His Holiness openly enjoined upon the faithful in Germany to vote for the advocates of this measure; though it was precisely for interference of this kind with the free action of German subjects that his predecessor had brought down upon him all the thunderbolts of the May Laws.\* Yet all these laws were now melting away, like snow-wreaths in thaw-time; and every day was bringing with it some resolute act of jettison on the part of the Prussian Government. Simultaneously almost with the Pope's striking in on behalf of the Army Law, which was one of Bismarck's most pressing necessities, the Prussian Diet was treated to another new May Law Amendment Act, with a less stringent oath for the bishops—the substitution, in fact, of the old one for the new; and shout after shout of exultant victory went up from the Clerical camp. In the course of as many years, no fewer than six repeal and remedial measures—not to speak of royal ordinances—were passed by the Prussian Diet in favour of the Catholic Church; and each time such a measure was passed, the Liberal Press cried out that it was another mighty stride towards Canossa on the part of the statesman who had solemnly vowed he *•*never would go there, either in body or in spirit.

But Bismarck was ready enough with a justification for the policy he was now pursuing. The May Laws, he argued, had now outlived their original purpose, which was a 'combative' and temporary one, and there was therefore no reason for maintaining them intact. While admitting that he could not disclaim political responsibility for these statutes as a whole, still the case was very different with regard to their details, with which he was 'not even yet acquainted in all their outs and ins,' and for the elaboration of which his ministerial subordinates had been accountable. In the course of time, however, he had been able to pay more attention to those details, and the result was a conviction on his part that there was now no

reason why they should not be repealed or modified. The May Laws, said the Chancellor, were often spoken of as, not what they really were, a melancholy necessity, but as a sort of venerable palladium of the Prussian State, which ought in no circumstances to be touched at the risk of impairing the national honour. The fact was, however, that the abrogation or revision of the statutes in question involved no question of honour at all, but only of expedience. He was convinced that, in the heat of conflict, the Prussian Government had occupied a considerable amount of territory belonging to the enemy of a pretty worthless kind—regions that he could only assign to that category of aims which the English described as a ‘wild-goose chase.’

A ‘wild-goose chase,’ indeed, for the man who had achieved all his greatest successes by a policy of ‘blood and iron,’ to seek to bend to his will a Spiritual Power whose foundations are more deeply rooted, as well in the present as in the past, than the German Empire itself. Bismarck crushed the Danes, defeated the Austrians, overwhelmed the French, and otherwise overcame a thousand enemies and obstacles. But there are two stupendous agencies in face of which he has had to own himself impotent and baffled—the spirit of Revolution and the spirit of Religion as the latter is practised by the apostles of invincible Rome. ‘Monsieur de Bismarck,’ said M. Thiers once to Count Arnim,—‘Monsieur de Bismarck is a remarkable man, but what I cannot understand from any point of view is his Church policy. He will smart for it—he will indeed. Tell him from me that he is on the wrong track. Towards the end of the battle of Waterloo, when Napoleon was in despair, a great wag went up to him and said, “Sire, the English have lost an enormous number of men.” “Yes,” replied the Emperor, “but I have lost the battle.” And thus, too, it will one day be with M. de Bismarck and the Church, depend upon it.’

## CHAPTER IX.

## FROM THE DEATH OF WILLIAM I. TO BISMARCK'S DISMISSAL.

ON the 9th March, 1888, the Emperor William I., laden with years and honours as no monarch had ever been before him, passed away; and the wintry storms which raged at the hour of his death, and lent additional majesty to the magnificence of his funeral procession, were but the presage of the painful controversies destined to mark the brief and troubled reign of his hapless successor. At the death-bed of the Emperor no one had been a more sedulous or grief-stricken watcher than the man who had gone through and done so much for him as his trusty Chancellor; and when at last he rose from his kneeling posture beside the grand old Kaiser, after kissing his hand now cold in death, and leaving a wreath of corn-flowers on his bier, he felt as every one must feel whom death has divorced from the object of a life-long devotion. Equally deep, too, and almost overpowering, was his emotion when, a few hours later, Bismarck appeared in the Reichstag to make official announcement of the demise of his sovereign. The writer of these pages was a witness of this memorable scene, and had better here repeat the words with which he painted it at the time:—

‘Presently the Chancellor made his appearance, wearing his half-dress Cuirassier uniform adorned with the military *Ordre pour le Mérite*—the most highly-prized of all the decorations which were rained upon him by his ever-grateful and departed master. Approaching his place, he makes a profound obeisance to the representatives of the German people, who then, with the simultaneous precision of a Prussian battalion on the drill-ground, start to their feet, and strain every nerve to catch the words which the

great maker and foremost fighting man of the first Emperor of a reunited Germany is going to address to them on this historic occasion. All the inmates of the galleries, too, rise from their seats, and a pin, a leaf, a feather almost might be heard to fall in the large arena. The Chancellor is looking somewhat pale, for he has been watching by the death-bed of his departed master the better part of two long nights and days; and the load of responsibility and policy has been weighing heavily on him. A few seconds elapse before he can find the right use of his voice, and as he goes on it is apparent that he is struggling hard to master his profound emotion. His tones are slow, measured, subdued, and sadly serious in the extreme, and his looks are now and then touched with a tinge of melancholy tenderness. No longer the masterful man of blood and iron, he is now under the influence of all that is tender, sorrowful, and sentimental in his nature, and his hearers listen to him with rapt attention as he speaks.

‘After dwelling on the sources of satisfaction which had “embellished and illumined” the Emperor’s last days,—the sympathy of the whole world for the fate of his stricken son, and the addition of a new military pillar to the structure of national unity,—Bismarck concluded :

“Gentlemen, may the heroic valour, the high sense of national honour, and, above all things, the faithful and laborious devotion to duty in the service of the Fatherland, and the love for it which were embodied in our deceased sovereign—may these qualities, I say, which our departed Emperor has left behind for us, become the imperishable inheritance of our nation. I hope to God that this inheritance may be faithfully treasured by us in peace and war, with heroism, with loyalty, with love of labour and devotion to duty, by all of us especially who have to take part in the business of our Fatherland.”

‘The strong emotion under which the Chancellor was labouring during the measured and almost broken delivery of this speech, acted contagiously on his hearers, and many of them could not repress their tears, nor smother their

sobs. A sea of the noblest and most magnanimous memories connected with the reign of the nonagenarian monarch, now no more, rushed into the minds of all alike, whether friend or foe of his Chancellor's policy; and the whole German people, in the persons of the grief-struck Deputies, seemed to be more than ever united by the bonds of their common past and their present sorrow.'

All knew what had been the personal relations between the deceased Emperor and the Chancellor, but one of the things which deepened the interest attaching to the tragic commencement of the Emperor Frederick's reign was uncertainty as to whether, and how far, the predilections of the father would be adopted or continued by the son. For it was well known that Bismarck and the Crown Prince had hitherto not always thought alike on some subjects, and that this divergence of view in the field of politics was aggravated by the existence of certain personal antipathies of which the Crown Prince, as a devoted husband, could hardly be expected to escape the infection. From the very cordial and affectionate reception, however, which the new Emperor gave the Chancellor, when the latter, at the head of the whole Prussian Ministry, had repaired to Leipzig to meet His Majesty on his wintry way back from San Remo, it could not be doubted that the new Emperor had decided to retain the services of the old Chancellor; and next day his resolution in this respect was still more clearly manifested, when his proclamation to the German people was accompanied by a missive to Prince Bismarck setting forth the lines on which he meant to rule. 'My dear Prince,' wrote the new Emperor, 'on assuming power I feel the necessity of addressing you, the long-trying first servant of my father, who now rests in God. You have been the faithful and brave adviser who gave shape to the aims of his policy, and secured their successful realisation. I and my House are and will remain most grateful to you. You, therefore, have, above all, a right to know the principles

which will direct me in my rule ;' and, after detailing these principles, the Emperor concluded : ' For the realisation of these my intentions I rely on your oft-proved devotion, and on the support of your tried experience. . . . Not caring for the splendour of great deeds, nor striving for glory, I shall be satisfied if it be one day said of my rule that it was beneficial to my people, useful to my country, and a blessing to the Empire.'

Within a short month, however, of this missive being addressed to the Chancellor, all Germany was startled one day to hear that Prince Bismarck had, in the most determined manner, put down his foot against the sanctioning, by the noble-minded Emperor, of an act which the Chancellor looked upon as fraught with consequences of a most injurious kind to the Empire. This was the proposed betrothal of the Emperor's daughter, the Princess Victoria, to Prince Alexander of Battenberg, ex-Prince of Bulgaria ; and it was known that the proposal enjoyed the warm support of the Princess's English mother. So far, indeed, had the latter's promotion of the marriage project already gone, that Prince Alexander—who was staying at Darmstadt—was about to respond to an invitation from Berlin, where personal honours, it was credibly said, awaited him in the shape of the superior title of '*Fürst*,' the command of an Army Corps, and the *Ordre pour le Mérite*, which is the highest reward of military distinction in the gift of the Prussian Crown. Hearing of all this, Prince Bismarck at once took fright, and threatened to resign rather than be a party to an imperilling of the European peace by granting his assent to such a scheme.

Nor was the scheme altogether new. *On revient toujours à ses premiers amours*. While as yet Prince Alexander sat on the Bulgarian throne, there had been a positive rumour of a projected alliance between him and the Princess Victoria—an alliance, it was then said, which was only prevented by the obstinate interposition of Prince Bismarck.



Those who then assumed the truth of this rumour supposed that, in seeking to frustrate the marriage design, Bismarck foresaw that Prince Alexander would probably have but a brief tenure of power at Sophia, and that he was merely actuated by a kindly desire to save a Hohenzollern Princess from the consequences of associating her fortunes with a sovereign who would in all probability, so to speak, soon be thrown upon his beam-ends, and have to take rank with the crowd of European pretenders and the discrowned.

But whatever the Chancellor's motives then were for acting as he was said to have done, his present reasons for opposing the union of Prince Alexander of Battenberg and Princess Victoria of Prussia were solely dictated by considerations of political expediency. Bismarck very well knew what were the mutual feelings animating the breasts of the Czar and the ex-ruler of Bulgaria respectively; and he further knew how the Emperor Alexander would interpret the alliance of his hated cousin with the daughter of the German Emperor, even should his cousin publicly, and for ever, abjure all desire to profit by opportunity and return to Bulgaria. It had been the dying request of the old Emperor William that his heirs should 'treat Russia with tender consideration,' and it was on this principle that Prince Bismarck was now endeavouring to act. All things considered, the Chancellor was strongly of opinion that the realisation of the marriage scheme in question could not but have a most detrimental influence on the relations between Germany and Russia, for the cordial maintenance of which he was primarily responsible, and he therefore hastened to point out to the Emperor Frederick the consequences that would attend the rejection of his earnest counsel, so far as his own continuance in office was concerned.

The worst of it was that the existence of this 'Chancellor crisis,' the first of its kind under the new reign, soon got bruited about—the Chancellor himself, through his 'body-organs,' had taken good care of that; and presently the

sorrows of the dying Emperor—for His Majesty's disease had proved to be incurable—were aggravated by the reverberations of the fierce and unseemly war of words which began to rage around the throne and penetrate into the chamber of his heroically borne sufferings. That Prince Bismarck should have seen fit to take the world so fully into his confidence with regard to the private affairs of the Imperial family, was matter of great astonishment to many; but, in doing so, the Chancellor's main object, apart from a desire to bring public pressure to bear on the projectors of the marriage scheme, was doubtless to convince Russia of his continued loyalty to his own promise and to her particular interests. Here was a golden opportunity of proving to the Czar how consistent a statesman he was, and it was too tempting to be resisted, even at the certain risk of wounding the family and sovereign pride of others nearer home.

The Chancellor had frequent interviews on the subject with the prostrate Emperor—to whom he presented a ponderous paper, setting forth the evil consequences sure to result from the proposed match; and with the Empress too, of whom he had seen but little in recent years, he was repeatedly compelled to confer. It was from the Empress, with her strong feelings and equally strong will, that Bismarck encountered most resistance, for the Emperor himself was comparatively lukewarm in the matter of the match, if not, indeed, opposed to it—another proof, if any other were wanted, thought the Chauvinistic partisans of the Chancellor, of the supreme influence of feminine counsels on the will of his present Majesty. 'I was completely at one with him,' said Bismarck once of the Emperor Frederick, after the latter's death. 'Several years before he came to the throne he asked me to remain in office when he should do so, and I assented on two conditions: that there would be no parliamentary *régime*, and no yielding to foreign' (by which he clearly meant feminine) 'influence'—the '*fremde*

*Hände und Mit-Regenten in Deutschland*’ of the Saxe-Coburg pamphleteer. ‘He had no difficulty in agreeing to these conditions; and, in spite of what people said, I declare that there was afterwards complete agreement between us—especially in the Battenberg affair.’<sup>1</sup>

Bismarck, however, had the utmost difficulty in persuading the Empress to yield to the views no less of himself than of her consort on the question of the proposed marriage; but at last his will, if not his reasons, triumphed over Her Majesty’s pet purpose, after an interview in the palace of the latter lasting nearly two hours. One can well understand how interesting and dramatic must have been the dialogue between two such skilled and resolute diplomatists. But stone walls told no tales, and imagination could only conjure up the details of what was beyond doubt an historic meeting of the first order. All that we were told, on the authority of a semi-official print, was that at last the august lady, worn out by the public and private worries of the whole affair, clasped both the hands of the Chancellor in hers, and said, in a voice broken with emotion, ‘I sacrifice my daughter’s happiness on the altar of the Fatherland.’

Her daughter, however, was subsequently wedded to a Prince of Schaumburg-Lippe, while her intended husband consoled himself by changing his name and marrying an actress; but still the ‘Battenberg affair’ will always occupy a no less prominent than painful page in the annals of the Court of Berlin. It will be long before the bitter controversies of that tragic time are forgotten,—controversies which even dragged in the name of Queen Victoria as a warm promoter of the proposed union, and as an interfering ‘*Mit-Regent*’ in Germany; though Her Britannic Majesty had no more to do with the projected match than the man in the moon, as she herself was able to convince Bismarck on the occasion of her visit to Charlottenburg, when the Chancellor,

<sup>1</sup> In an interview at Friedrichsruh with a representative of the *Petit Journal*.

after a long interview with her, declared her to be possessed of 'wisdom, moderation, and other statesmanlike qualities of the very highest kind.'

But one remarkable incident connected with the Battenberg affair still remains to be noted. The 'Chancellor crisis' resulting from it had assumed something like acute form on 31st March, and the 1st April was the birthday of Bismarck, to whom, and to all of whose acts, Prince William, now Crown Prince, was at that time attached with all the blind devotion of a hero-worshipper. There can be no doubt that Prince William was aware of what was then passing about 'the Battenberger,' as he was called; and the following were the words he used when toasting Bismarck at the latter's own birthday banquet:

'Your Serene Highness,—Among all the forty years which you have mentioned there is probably none so serious and momentous as the present one. The Emperor William, whom you long and faithfully served for twenty-seven years, has departed. The nation enthusiastically acclaims our present sovereign, who helped to found the Fatherland as it now is. Your Serene Highness, like all of us, will serve him with the same old German fidelity as you showed to the deceased Kaiser. To use a military simile, I may compare our present situation to a regiment which is advancing to storm. The colonel of the regiment has fallen, and the next in command, though severely wounded, is still riding boldly forward. At this moment all eyes are turned towards the colours, which the bearer is swinging aloft. In this manner, too, your Serene Highness is holding high the banner of the Reich, and it is the sincerest wish of our hearts that you may long be spared to hold aloft the Imperial standard in company with our beloved and revered Kaiser. God bless and protect him, and your Serene Highness also!'

There were some who professed to know that, in opposing the Battenberg marriage project as he did, the 'banner-bearer of the Reich' was primarily influenced by a desire to please Prince William, who was said to entertain a strong personal dislike to the idea of the match, and that the Chancellor merely used the plea of policy towards Russia as a pretext for further winning the favour of the coming young Emperor. Very likely the wish to prove complaisant

to the Crown Prince may have furnished him with an extra incentive to put his foot down upon the wedding scheme ; but his chief reasons for opposing it with a threat to resign are doubtless to be found in the long State paper on the subject which he presented to the Emperor. These reasons, as we know, had the ultimate effect of terminating the 'Chancellor crisis,' which had kept all Germany in such a state of stormy ferment for about a fortnight ; but a little later Bismarck found himself and his Prussian colleagues involved in another 'Ministerial crisis,' on account of the opposition which the policy of Herr von Puttkamer, Minister of the Interior, had encountered at the hands of the Emperor-King and his private advisers. This time the policy of these advisers prevailed, and Puttkamer had to go, amid exultant shouts from the Liberals, who hailed this dismissal of a reactionary Minister by his dying sovereign as a forecast of what would yet happen to the Chancellor himself. Meanwhile, Bismarck marked his sense of his colleague's fall by paying him a long visit of condolence, and by afterwards giving a banquet in his honour ; yet the time was painful enough with all its other public controversies, and the Prussian Cabinet had no desire to add to the terrible sufferings of the moribund Emperor by inflicting upon him the duty of selecting new Ministers. Thus politics were pretty much at a standstill during His Majesty's short and sorrow-laden reign, public attention being almost exclusively absorbed by the medical and other unseemly wranglings which raged around his bed of suffering.

And to these bitter controversies Bismarck himself had been one of the chief contributors ; for it was at his instance that an account of the famous 'canula incident' was first made public — an incident which led to open warfare between the medical attendants of the dying Emperor, and to the subsequent battle of their respective books. At the time, Sir M. Mackenzie fondly imagined that the divulgence of the incident referred to was due to the malice of one of

his German colleagues, who thus wished to discredit him and all his ways; but the source of the imputation which was cast upon his professional character lay very much higher. The truth is, that as Bismarck had set himself to frustrate the Battenberg project for reasons which were both political and personal, so he now also entered the ranks of the active opponents of this other *protégé* of the Empress Frederick, firmly believing, as he did, that the English doctor, apart from the question of his professional competence, had been endeavouring to play a political part in the affairs of Germany.

And this leads us to refer to a rumour, current at the time, that Bismarck himself had joined Prince William in an endeavour to bar the suffering Crown Prince's succession to the throne in the event of the old Emperor's death, and to place the Government in the hands of a regency. Now, the interests of truth compel us to declare that this rumour was devoid of all basis of fact. There never was such an intrigue either on the part of Prince William or of Prince Bismarck, or of both combined. The question of a regency was never so much as mooted or mentioned to the Crown Prince by those who might have been entitled to do so; but, on the other hand, the suffering Crown Prince himself had voluntarily given it to be understood that he would not assume the reins of power were it placed beyond question that he was incurably affected with cancer. This remarkable fact was placed upon record by the organ of the German Foreign Office soon after the death of the Emperor Frederick, and was disputed by none. But it is a fact which never received the attention it deserved from all who tried to attain to a clear understanding of the events of that sad and controversial time.

The following was the way in which these events were viewed by the statesmen of Berlin. Whatever may be said about the original diagnosis of the Crown Prince's disease by his English doctor, who pronounced it to be a mere wart, he

at least committed himself, in common with all his colleagues at San Remo, to the signed declaration that their illustrious patient was now beyond doubt suffering from cancer. 'Though Schrötter,' says Mackenzie in his book, 'did not use the word cancer, he made it perfectly clear to the Crown Prince that that was what we believed him to be suffering from. I am absolutely sure that His Imperial Highness was under no misapprehension on the subject.' Then why did the Crown Prince, when at last his father died, not adhere to his previous resolution, and decline to mount the throne? The answer furnished at Berlin was, that, in the interval, his English doctor had dropped into his patient's mind the poison of doubt as to whether, after all, he was really suffering from an incurable ailment; and it is certain, at any rate, that between the time of the San Remo declaration and the death of the Emperor, when Mackenzie, *before* the *post-mortem* examination, again expressed his 'opinion that the disease from which the Emperor Frederick died was cancer,' it is certain, we say, that in this interval he suggested to his illustrious patient doubts (honest enough, for all we know, they may have been) as to the true nature of his malady.

But that he did so from political motives more than from scientific conviction, was the serious belief of Bismarck and others in Berlin, who thus accused this English specialist of wilful and wanton interference with the affairs of Germany; and it was this belief that was uppermost in the mind of the Chancellor, when, a few hours after the death of the Emperor, he led Mackenzie (from the presence of His Majesty's successor) into an inner room, 'where he suggested,' wrote Mackenzie, 'that I should (at once) draw up a brief report on the case. . . . It was hoped that, being under the absolute conviction that there was to be no *post-mortem* examination, I should be entrapped into making some equivocal statement as to the nature of the disease. After I had thus committed myself, the autopsy

would be made and the cancer clearly proved, to my everlasting discomfiture. It was a neat enough little plot in its way . . .’ But the astute Mackenzie was equal to the situation, and, on the strength of recent symptoms and analysis, hastened to anticipate the result of the *post-mortem* verdict of his colleagues, by *again* reducing to writing his opinion that the ‘disease from which the Emperor Frederick died was cancer.’ It was not necessary to infer, with those who accused the English throat-doctor of having played a political part in the course of his professional attendance on the deceased Emperor, that he had done so in explicit agreement with His Majesty’s distracted consort. But there were many who believed that the *rôle* which had been played by the ‘medical Kaiser-maker’ was not so much an individual intrigue as a political conspiracy; and a proof of this conviction was to be found in the bitterness with which the organs of the Press devoted to the Chancellor now began to asperse the character and aims of the Dowager Empress.

Fresh fuel was only added to the languishing fury of these unscrupulous scribes, when a Berlin magazine (the *Deutsche Rundschau*) published copious extracts from the Diary which had been kept by the deceased Emperor Frederick during the war with France, and which at once caused an immense sensation throughout Germany, but nowhere more than at Friedrichsruh. The author of this revelation turned out to be Dr. Geffcken, a publicist who entertained a strong personal pique against Bismarck, and who had long been the private adviser of the Emperor Frederick. He had even, as early as 1885, prepared for the contingency of the old Emperor’s death, by drawing up the proclamation to his people which the Emperor Frederick actually issued on ascending the throne, together with the accompanying missive to Bismarck, laying down the lines of his policy, from which we have already quoted. In 1873, the Crown Prince had lent this trusted man of



letters his Diary for the purpose of private perusal ; but, before returning it to its illustrious author, Geffcken had been careful to retain a copy of the most interesting and important passages ; and these it was that, soon after the Emperor had succumbed to his sufferings, he hastened to reveal to the world with the well-meant but ill-advised object of silencing some of His Majesty's detractors, and placing him on a still higher level of merit than had been assigned him, even by his warmest admirers. Hitherto Prince Bismarck had monopolised all the glory of being the maker and '*Mehrer*' of the Reich ; but Dr. Geffcken would show that the much-maligned monarch, who had lately passed away, was entitled to a very large share of the iron Chancellor's fame.

With this object, therefore, he hastened to publish those extracts from His Majesty's Diary which he himself had retained, and the publication acted like a bombshell at Friedrichsruh. Of this bombshell the splinter which struck deepest into the flesh of the Chancellor was the fancied insinuation, frequently repeated throughout the Diary, that the Crown Prince, and not Bismarck, was the real author of the Empire ; and in a certain, but very subsidiary, sense this was quite true. It was true that the Crown Prince had suggested an Imperial crown as the coping-stone of the political edifice resulting from the French war ; but it was equally true that the main builder of this edifice had been Bismarck.

Of all the character-sketches of the Emperor Frederick which appeared after his death, the truest, though at the same time the most treacherous, was that emanating from the master-pen of Gustav Freytag, the novelist, a man who was the camp companion and confidant of the Crown Prince during the earlier stages of the French war. In this most interesting and merciless monologue, Freytag relates how the Crown Prince, immediately after the battle of Wörth, 'wrote a memorandum for the Chancellor as to what was desirable for Germany in the event of peace

being concluded, and gave it me to read.' From a perusal of this paper, as well as from repeated conversations with the Crown Prince on the subject, Freytag concluded that 'he was full of the princely pride which desires what is highest for its own sake ; and in his eyes the highest earthly position was that beneath the Imperial crown. . . . The idea of the German Empire grew out of princely pride in his soul ; it became his ardent wish ; and I think he was the originator and motive-power of this innovation. . . . It is wholly unknown to the writer of these lines what the federal Chancellor then thought of the idea of a German Empire, and whether he regarded this future crowning of the new State edifice as the right one. I think, however, that, as a Prussian, he can hardly have felt any enthusiasm for such a splendid accessory to real power, and that, as a statesman, he deemed it inexpedient to limit his freedom of resolution by any obligation, but that he gradually accepted the heartfelt wish of the heir to the throne, and made it possible and practicable in his own way when events convinced him that this solution of the difficulty was, on the whole, the best. It was he, at any rate, who realised the idea, so far as it seemed to him expedient.'

Nothing, indeed, could be fairer than this statement of the case. Bismarck, from the first, had a main eye to essentials, while the Crown Prince concerned himself more with the merely ornamental aspects of the question, as was natural enough with a man of his histrionic tastes. It mattered comparatively little to Bismarck what form the federation of all Germany should take, provided that North and South could be welded into one political whole under the presidency, leadership, hegemony—call it what you will—of the King of Prussia ; and this federation was unquestionably his work. But so little importance did he attach to mere matters of form and title that, even after the Crown Prince's idea of the Empire had been adopted, the Chancellor took but a languid interest in the question as to

whether 'German Emperor' or 'Emperor of Germany' should be the King of Prussia's new title. This, said Bismarck, reminded him of the controversy between the *Homoöusians* and *Homoiousians* in the days of the Councils. On another occasion, when the Imperial title was being discussed, the Chancellor asked, 'Does any one know the Latin for sausage?' '*Farcimentum*,' replied one. '*Farci-men*,' said another. '*Farcimentum vel farcimen*,' whichever you please, rejoined the Chancellor, with a smile, '*nescio quid mihi magis farcimentum esset*.' This had, indeed, been his attitude of comparative indifference all through to the question of mere federal *form*, federal *fact* being his absorbing care; nor has any one ever sought to contest his supreme merits, in the latter respect, as the unifier of Germany.

The only wonder, therefore, was that the publication of the Crown Prince's Diary should have exasperated him so much, and that in the first heat of his anger he should have applied to the young Emperor for leave to take criminal action against the authors of the publication, on the ground that, if it were genuine, they could be prosecuted for the divulgence of State secrets; while, if spurious, as the Chancellor, from internal evidence, pronounced it to be, they could equally be proceeded against 'for calumniating the memories of the deceased Emperors Frederick and William. That this should be done is in the interest of your Majesty's two predecessors, whose memory forms a valuable possession of the people and of the dynasty that should be preserved from the disfiguring tendencies with which this anonymous publication, accomplished in the interest of revolution and domestic discord, is primarily directed *against the Emperor Frederick*.'

In his elaborate petition to the young Emperor setting forth all these considerations, and arguing against the genuineness of the Diary, the Chancellor committed himself to a series of statements which might thus be summarised:—That in 1870 the Crown Prince was so dis-

trusted by his father that he was kept purposely outside the sphere of political negotiations ; that this distrust was due to the indiscreet revelations which the Crown Prince might make to the English Court, 'which was full of French sympathies,' as well as to the violent means and ambitious designs recommended to the Crown Prince by political counsellors of doubtful ability ; that the Crown Prince, writing at the time and on the spot ; made a multitude of mistakes as to time and fact ; that the Crown Prince entertained ideas of treachery to his South German allies, 'equally contemptible from the standpoint of honourable feeling and from that of policy ;' that the Crown Prince surrounded himself with advisers clumsy, dishonourable, and incapable ; and that, in short, he was very much of a fool, if not also something more.

On the strength of these and other considerations, as arrayed by Bismarck himself, he begged the young Emperor for leave to prosecute the 'calumniators' of his father ; and perhaps no more audacious petition was ever presented to his sovereign by any Minister. That William II. should have granted the prayer of this petition was not altogether unnatural, considering his almost blind devotion at this time to the great Chancellor ; but that he should have also sanctioned the immediate publication of this petition, which contained so many grave charges against the character of his own father, filled every one with sheer amazement. For it was clear to all that, if calumny of the Emperor Frederick's memory had been committed, it was not so much the work of those who published as of those who affected to doubt the genuineness of his Diary ; nor was it allowed to be any justification or extenuation of their offence that they could prove their libel to be true in fact. All Germany, all Europe, was pained and disgusted beyond measure with this other crying scandal at the Court of Berlin.

It is not at all improbable that, in resolving to ferret out

the authors of the Diary publication, Bismarck thought he might be able to implicate some who had stood much nearer to the deceased Emperor than a pedantic publicist, who was employed to draft His Majesty's proclamations (as Blumenthal had fought his battles), and who had motives of his own for 'belittling the services of the Chancellor.' But the only game which he and his minions could unearth was poor Dr. Geffcken, who was solely and exclusively responsible for the publication of the Diary, and who was accordingly lodged in a Berlin gaol, pending an inquiry into all the circumstances of his offence. Here he languished for ninety-nine days—or for exactly the same length of time as his patron, the Emperor Frederick, had sat upon his throne; and then he was liberated by decision of the Supreme Court at Leipzig, which ruled that although the published Diary of his late Majesty was proved to have been quite genuine, and contained intelligence of the nature of State secrets whereof the publication was clearly forbidden by the Criminal Code, nevertheless that the accused was not conscious of the nature of the offence which he committed in divulging them. The Court therefore decreed that the prosecution should be stopped and the prisoner set free.

In the course of his career Bismarck had frequently coerced Parliament, but he now found it impossible to control a court of law; so, in view of this unexpected issue of the Geffcken affair, all he could do was to get the Emperor's permission to publish the text of the *Acte d'Accusation*, to the end that the world at large might draw its own conclusion as to the merits of the case. The world at large did draw its own conclusion, and made special note of the fact, which was elicited, among others, in the course of the criminal inquiry, that hand in hand with Dr. Geffcken's public attempt to discredit Bismarck went a secret endeavour on his part to damage him in the eyes of the new Emperor. This attempt took the form of a very lengthy paper on the prospects of the young Emperor William's reign, comprising

reflections on all the various phases and aspects of the Chancellor's foreign, domestic, and ecclesiastical policy. These reflections culminated in a lament on the increase of ministerial one-man power in Germany, and in a solemn warning against the concentration of so much authority in an individual, after the present Chancellor had quitted the stage, as in the course of things he would soon have to do—a species of authority which, in the long run, would weaken that of the Crown and run counter to the Federal character of the Empire. This paper, it is true, only became primarily known to the young Emperor through the prosecution of Dr. Geffcken, but it nevertheless contained the seed-germs of those ideas with which His Majesty, at no distant date, was to brace himself up to act.

These ideas, moreover, were ministered to by a man in the *entourage* of the Emperor, who had been the discovery, curiously enough, of an English diplomatist whom the Bismarcks unscrupulously sought to ruin in connection with the Geffcken case. This was Sir Robert Morier, Her Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburg, whose name, according to the *Acte d'Accusation*, had frequently occurred in the correspondence between Dr. Geffcken and his fellow-counsellor of the late Emperor, Baron von Roggenbach, a Liberal politician of Baden. During the war of 1870, Sir Robert (then only Mr. Morier) had been English Chargé d'Affaires at Darmstadt, the home of the Princess Alice, and he was also an especial favourite of the Queen's eldest daughter, who, during the war, resided mostly at Homburg, though she frequently went over to her sister's Court. Now Bismarck had always disliked Sir Robert (as he has always disliked strong men of divergent views), and even prevented his appointment at the Court of Berlin, as arguing, in the words of Freytag, that 'to no Minister can the foreign diplomatist be welcome who, besides his official relations, maintains intimate personal ones with the members of the Court themselves.' When at Darmstadt Sir Robert had

been on terms of great personal intimacy both with the Princess Alice and her sister the Crown Princess; and now, while the Geffcken inquiry was pending, Bismarck, through his chief 'body-organ,' launched the charge that the English diplomatist had been guilty of the crime of informing the French (Marshal Bazaine) as to the movements of the German armies near Metz. To estimate the full force of this very grave charge, which was aimed, as the initiated knew full well, very much higher than at Her Majesty's representative in Russia, it had better be read in the light of Freytag's narrative:

'The confidential reports which went to England from headquarters were undeniably a difficult but an unavoidable one. The Crown Prince himself wrote to his consort at Homburg every day, and the removal of headquarters was sometimes delayed a little because this correspondence still claimed his time. Prince Louis of Hesse, too, wrote from his Division to his wife, the Princess Alice. . . . Both Princesses, in passionate anxiety about the welfare and lives of the men they loved, wrote in their turn to their august mother and the family in London. And not only the Princesses themselves, but also the people about them, were zealous in letter-writing. How could the writers always judge whether the concealment of any piece of news was of military importance or not? And in England the obligation to keep such a secret had practically no weight. What crossed the North Sea could be sent to France again in letters a few hours latter. It was therefore natural that the French got to know, *vid* England, all sorts of things about our army which it would have been better to keep secret.'

It is in the light, we repeat, of such a narrative as this that the hunters after hidden motives were fain to discover Bismarck's true object in bringing such an accusation against Sir Robert Morier. 'What in the world is Morier to us?' asked one journal. 'If possible, indeed, still less than Hecuba,'—a parody on the Chancellor's clever and contemptuous reference to Bulgaria and her Battenberg Prince's claims on German sympathy and support. It was to no purpose that the irate Chancellor, with the Emperor's express sanction, published detailed reports from Major von Deines,

late military attaché of the German Embassy in Madrid, recording conversations with Marshal Bazaine, who avowed that 'the first intelligence as to the forward movement, by the left, of the Germans across the Moselle reached him by means of a telegram of the English Envoy at Darmstadt, the same who was here (in Madrid) until lately.' Sir Robert Morier put this question to the exiled Marshal, who denied that he had ever 'had a conversation of the kind with any one whatsoever;' and the controversy at last ended by Sir Robert sending to the London Press the private correspondence on the subject which had passed between him and the Chancellor's son, Count Herbert, to whom, as Foreign Secretary, His Excellency had appealed, 'as a gentleman and man of honour, to issue an immediate contradiction of the foul and infamous libel and calumny,' though this was a satisfaction which the Count denied him. It was indeed a very bitter passage of arms, and on all sides it was admitted that the Bismarcks got the worst of it. But the most curious thing about the incident was its epilogue, which was to show that the man who helped (though perhaps unwittingly) to bring about the fall of the Bismarcks had been first introduced into the Emperor's family by the English diplomatist whom they had so unscrupulously sought to ruin. This was Dr. Hinzpeter, whom Sir Robert Morier, when at Darmstadt, had recommended to the Crown Princess as tutor to her eldest son, and who continued to maintain his great personal ascendancy over his pupil after he had mounted the throne. But to have said this is meanwhile to have anticipated enough.

On the 31st December, 1888, about six months after his accession to the throne, and while the Geffcken and Morier controversies were at their height, William II. sent his Chancellor the following telegram:

'Dear Prince,—The year which has brought us such severe afflictions and irreparable losses is drawing to a close. The thought that you still stand faithful at my side, and enter the New Year in vigorous



strength, fills me with joy and comfort. From the bottom of my heart I desire for you happiness, blessings, and, above all, lasting health, and pray Heaven that I may long be permitted to work with you for the welfare and greatness of our Fatherland.'

Within fifteen months of the date of this complimentary message, the young Emperor had (on March 22, 1890) dismissed Prince Bismarck from office, and telegraphed to a friend in Weimar :

' Many thanks for your friendly letter. I have indeed gone through bitter experiences, and have passed many painful hours. My heart is as sorrowful as if I had again lost my grandfather ! But it is so appointed to me by God ; and it has to be borne, even though I should fall under the burden. The post of officer of the watch on the ship of State has fallen to my lot. Her course remains the same : so now, full steam ahead ! '

We repeat that, within fifteen short months of his addressing a fervent hope for continued co-operation between himself and his political *Palinurus*, who had guided the ship of State through so many storms and perils, the Emperor had suddenly dropped his pilot, and taken his own stand on the bridge, shouting out his orders to the man at the wheel, and to all else, in a firm and lusty voice. The fall of Bismarck was felt by all to be one of the wonders of the century ; and assuredly no more unexpected event ever happened, though the French, it is true, will have it that nothing is so certain as the unexpected. Cloyed as it is with the taste of manifold sensations, the palate of the European public was tickled, as it had never been before, by the revelation that even a Bismarck was not at all deemed indispensable to the continued welfare of his country, and that a young and inexperienced ruler like the Emperor William had been capable of so supreme an act of courage as to dispense—and brusquely, too—with the services of a man who had been the making of his nation.

That these services had of late been again particularly successful in the cause of peace, no one could doubt who

reviewed the history of the Empire's foreign relations during the brief period of the new sovereign's reign, and recalled all the incidents of the visits which the Chancellor's pacific policy had already enabled His Majesty to pay to the chief Courts of Europe—St. Petersburg, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Vienna, Rome (both the Quirinal and the Vatican), Osborne, Athens, and Constantinople. Nor did the Chancellor's popularity at home ever seem to have been higher than when the Sovereigns of the Triple Alliance respectively returned their German partner's visit. Berlin has been the scene of many pomps and functions, but of few more spontaneous and imposing than the triumphal entry—for triumphal it must be called—of King Humbert in the summer of 1889. Yet the Allied Sovereigns of Germany and Italy were not more vociferously cheered than the real authors of the Alliance, Bismarck and Crispi, who similarly figured together in the memorable pageant.

To what extent the German Chancellor enjoyed the respect and confidence of the Emperors of Austria and Russia, was shown by the personal honours which these two monarchs paid him on the occasion of their separate return visits during the same year; and how very high he stood in the favour of his own Imperial master must be inferred, among other things, from the visit paid by the latter to his Chancellor at Friedrichsruh, from the fact that they were repeatedly photographed together, from the frequency with which the Emperor was the Prince's guest in Berlin, and from the gushing telegrams which His Majesty sent his Chancellor from all the foreign Courts and other places which he visited. Bismarck himself, with tears in his eyes, had vowed that, as long as life lasted, he would never leave the young Emperor's side, and he had also assured the Czar that the latter might confidently rely on his remaining in office. The Emperor, on the other hand, had been equally profuse in his professions of undying devotion to his idolised grandfather's great Chancellor; and yet, before he had been

two whole years on the throne, this same young Emperor had dismissed the old Chancellor from his various offices, stripped him of his functions as completely as Wolsey had been deprived of all his power by Henry VIII., and sent him packing from the capital with a mockery of valedictory honours, which made Bismarck himself compare his departure to a 'first-class funeral.' Ever since the death of the old Emperor the European public had been treated to a continuous feast of supreme sensations at Berlin; but here at last was an item in the bill of fare, compared with which the most highly-seasoned dishes previously served up seemed flabby and flavourless.

It was the middle of March (1889) when the German people were suddenly startled with the news of another 'Chancellor crisis,' of which they had already weathered so many; and within a fortnight of this time Prince Bismarck, *procul negotiis*, was celebrating his seventy-fifth birthday in savage bitterness at Friedrichsruh, with General von Caprivi reigning in his stead as Grand Vizier. So straight and swift had been the march of events. Hitherto these 'Chancellor crises' had always been created by a threat on the part of the Prince to resign unless he had his own way,—a threat which had become part of the regular machinery of Government, and it had always proved effective. But when he tried to apply the same kind of pressure to the high-mettled and ambitious young sovereign who had been his pupil and his pride as a probable ruler altogether after his own heart, he was surprised to find that the pressure was treated as a worn-out old formula. The Chancellor went home and failed to carry out his threat. The Emperor expressed astonishment at this inconsistency between the Prince's words and his acts, and sent repeated messages to remind him of his unfulfilled purpose. The Chancellor had been caught in his own trap,—hoist, so to speak, with his own petard, and he had to yield to the inevitable.

Such, in brief, was the mere manner of his dismissal from a post which he had held for more than a quarter of a century, with results which must for ever live in the page of history. Even rumour was all but mute as to the parting interview between master and man; and though it whispered with truth of an ink-bottle which, at that final meeting, flew up from a table by force of the Prince's indignant fist, it never assumed a more mendacious or malignant form than when it represented the haughty Chancellor as 'stooping before the woman whom he had so often humbled,' as interceding with the Empress Frederick to prevent his fall. He was even too proud and too resentful to accept and wear the honours—Duke of Lauenburg and Colonel-General of Cavalry, with the rank of Field-Marshal—which the Emperor lavished upon him at leaving, with honeyed words of praise and thankfulness. Such empty honours, thought the ex-Chancellor, lent but additional bitterness to the mockery of undertaker's woe at the 'first-class funeral' to which he had been treated,—a funeral which would fain also have entombed the world-renowned and imperishable name of Bismarck in the comparatively obscure and parochial title of Lauenburg. Nevertheless, this official 'funeral,' this sudden termination of so grand and historical a career, was marked by incidents of so moving and memorable a kind as to deserve recording in these pages, as the writer described the scene at the time:

'Thousands upon thousands had crowded to the Wilhelm-Strasse to catch a final and a farewell glimpse of the great statesman who was to leave the spot where his mighty spirit had ruled and brooded so long. Prince Bismarck had spent the last few days in paying and receiving farewell calls, and among the most interesting of the former was a drive to Charlottenburg. The ex-Chancellor had already taken personal leave of all the royal Princes, but on Friday there still remained one member of the Hohenzollern family to whom he owed his *devoir*, and this was the Emperor-King William I., now lying in marble state beside his royal parents in the mausoleum at Charlottenburg.

'Quietly driving out here towards the gloaming, the Chancellor

entered the solitary vault and laid a few roses on the tomb of the monarch whom he had served so long and nobly and loved so well. Sad and overpowering must have been his thoughts as, rising from his knees, he took a final farewell of the man whom he had made an Emperor, and who had kept his vow to cling to him to the last. That was a touching farewell; but a more overwhelming leave-taking still awaited the Prince, when, in his accustomed Cuirassier uniform, with his son Count Herbert at his side, and his wife and daughter and their son in a carriage following, he left the Radziwill Palace and began his progress through the densely-crowded and excited streets to the Lehrter Station, here to take train for Friedrichsruh.

‘As if the funeral of some great and deep-mourned man were afoot, Berlin had poured out all the best elements in its population to weep and wildly wave their hats and handkerchiefs, to scatter flowers, and to struggle to shake and kiss the hand of the man who was about to pass from their midst and be lost to them. This is not the language of exaggeration, but the sober record of incidents which I saw with my own eyes. I have never seen so respectable a crowd in Berlin, which contained none of the usual constituents of a mob, but was recruited from all the best circles in Berlin society, especially the official world; nor could I have believed that so severe and sombre a class of people could ever betray so much downright emotion.

‘It was only with the utmost difficulty that the mounted constables escorting the Chancellor’s open carriage could cleave a passage for it through the encompassing throngs of those who pushed towards him to offer him the choicest of spring flowers, and seize his hand to shake or kiss it. It was no wonder that all this spontaneous demonstration of popular devotion almost unmanned its object, and made the man of blood and iron almost melt in tears. This was the scene which presented itself all along the Prince’s route between his forsaken palace and the railway station; and at this latter point the excitement was simply overwhelming. Vainly did the police attempt to keep the multitudes out of the station. In they burst and packed themselves on the platform around and behind the dismounted squadron of Cuirassiers, which, with standard and trumpets, had been sent by the Emperor to act as a guard of honour to the departing Prince, who, it must be remembered, carries with him into his rural retirement the rank of General-Oberst of Cavalry and Field-Marshal General.

‘But, in addition to this unusual guard of honour, the Emperor had also sent his personal aides-de-camp with his final adieux, accompanied by a magnificent device in flowers. The high officials formed the nucleus of a brilliant crowd of all that was foremost in the official world of Berlin—all the Ministers and Ambassadors, including those of England and France, and the whole array of those who had ever

owned the Chancellor as friend, or master, or hero, or all three in one. Every one sought to get a final word with him, or, at the very least, to press his hand; but in the midst of all this overflowing emotion and enthusiasm it was too much to expect anything like appropriate or coherent answers from the Prince, who really looked as if, for the very first time in his life, he had fairly lost his head.

‘Cheer after cheer, each louder and more thrilling than the other, went up and made the vaulted station ring, as the Prince showed himself at the window of his carriage, or in converse with some friend. In the intervals of the cheering the crowd struck up the “Wacht am Rhein,” or “Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles.” At last the excitement reached its culmination when the whistle shrieked the signal for departure, and when, amid a final salvo of frantic cheers blended with the sound of the Cuirassiers’ trumpets, the train slowly steamed out of the station, Prince Bismarck shaking hands from the window all the while. Then the crowd slowly dispersed, and as some of its members neared the Brandenburger Thor they encountered the young Emperor placidly trotting home from his afternoon ride in the Thiergarten.’

The Bismarck dynasty had at last fallen—father and son, Chancellor and Foreign Secretary, all of a heap; and the Emperor himself, who could not endure the idea of his Chancellor converting himself into an omnipotent Mayor of the Palace, had made bold to shake that dynasty down. The reasons which nerved him to do so were partly personal and partly political, as most motives are mixed. Unofficial counsellors had caught His Majesty’s ear, his Hinzpeters and others of higher name and rank, imbued with the ideas which, as we saw, had inspired Dr. Geffcken’s paper against the evils of ministerial one-man power; nor is it too much to affirm that the young and impulsive sovereign had again gradually, if perhaps indirectly and unconsciously, fallen to some extent under the influence of his mother, after they had become reconciled, and reflection on the son’s part had paved the way for regret. In the purely political field the Emperor was more than piqued that the Chancellor would not follow him over all the obstacles (to use a hunting simile) which intervened between him and a seeming solution of the Labour Question, on the

subject of which His Majesty hastened to call a Congress at Berlin; while, on the other hand, Bismarck insisted that his colleagues in the Prussian Cabinet should continue to be primarily responsible to him instead of (as really contemplated by the Constitution) to the Crown. As General Caprivi, the new Chancellor, said in his maiden speech, 'It was in the nature of men and things that, beside a force like that of Prince Bismarck, other characters could scarcely find a place, and that, in view of his self-dependent and single-minded way of thinking and acting, many an idea and many a wish of others, however good in themselves, had to be thrust into the background, and thus fail of realisation.' But the young Emperor-King, with his strong individuality and burning ambition to distinguish himself, resolved to change all this by reverting to the letter of the Constitution, which enjoined the direct responsibility of Ministers to himself.

This was the direct and primary cause of his quarrel with Bismarck, though, indeed, this was but the spark, as it were, that fired an ever-increasing mine of other causes, which might again be classed under the general heading— incompatibility of age and temper. 'How was it possible,' remarked a German diplomatist, 'for a clear-sighted and self-willed young Emperor of thirty to continue running in the same leash (so to speak) with an autocratic Chancellor of over seventy?' An agreeable person, says one of Lord Beaconsfield's characters, is a person who agrees with you; and Bismarck, in the eyes of his new master, had ceased to fulfil this definition of the term. For once in his life the iron and imperious Chancellor found, to his great astonishment, that the world contained a man with a will stronger than his own. Of the old Emperor, Bismarck once said, 'I have always been able to talk over if not convince my old master;' and, indeed, numerous cases might be quoted, the war of 1866 included, to show that William I. often based his decisions, in relation to his Chancellor, on the

reversed order of conviction and consent. But his grandson, who had the advantage of inheriting his English mother's strength of will with his mother's mental force and perspicacity, soon displayed a tendency to rebel against the submission of his judgment to any authority save that of his own instincts and intelligence; and in doing so, as was thought by many, he rendered—though at no slight risk—a very considerable service to the monarchical principle in Prussia and Germany, for which his successors will give him credit.

There can be little doubt that, in the course of his long and magnificent career, Prince Bismarck had insensibly come to establish a kind of personal *imperium in imperio* within the limits of the Prussian Crown. No one had fought more desperately than he to save the rights of this Crown from the curtailing scissors of a Constitution, as no one had been a more jealous defender of these rights after they had at last been limited and reduced to charter-form by the revolutionary movement of '48. Yet, if the truth must be told, this very same Bismarck had gradually, and perhaps even unconsciously, ended by absorbing into his own person the exercise of some of those rights which appertained exclusively to his sovereign.

With the accession of the young Kaiser authority within the Empire had become divided and contested, as it had also come to be under Ferdinand and his Wallenstein. The analogy is not perfect, but there is a clear similarity of a certain kind between the two cases; and Bismarck, too, according to his own avowal, found his native Butlers, his Devereux, his Leslies, and his Gordons, men who owed their official rise in the world to him alone. He suffered the inevitable penalty of all who have ever risen to transcendent heights of influence and power. In the course of his table-talk, during the French war, the Chancellor once remarked that, though the Prussian people huzza'd and beclapped their great Frederick when alive, they secretly



rubbed their hands in glee when finally the old tyrant had breathed his last. And the same remark applies, to some extent, to Bismarck's own official death, which certainly excited surprise throughout Germany, and sentimental sorrow, but comparatively little real regret, and no great apprehension for the future. As a financial journal well expressed it at the time, 'even the aspen-leaves of the Bourse never so much as quivered at the news of the mighty Chancellor's fall.' His countrymen adored him, vowing to be eternally grateful for the great things he had done, and were intensely proud of him as part of their national greatness; but, to speak the honest truth, they were beginning to groan under the weight of his personal authority and will, which overshadowed every walk of their public life; and this was more especially the case with his colleagues and immediate subordinates, with whom the Iron Chancellor enjoyed as little official popularity as was inspired by Wellington in the hearts of the troops whom he so often led to victorious battle. Every one felt that Bismarck's life-work was done, and that there would now be no great danger—nay, that there would be a positive advantage—in his leaving the further pursuit and development of his task to younger and fresher hands. In the oft-quoted words of Schiller:

‘Der Mohr hat seine Schuldigkeit gethan,  
Der Mohr kann gehen.’

But it is a thousand times more easy to wean one's self from the love of drink than from the love of power, and the latter was a species of intoxication in which, as it had been his greatest passion through life, Bismarck desired to revel until the day of his death. It is only affirming that he is mortal to say that, with all his splendid achievements, he committed some stupendous mistakes—his bootless combat with invincible Rome included—in the course of his life; but, perhaps, his crowning error of judgment was his misconception of the moment when Germany, through

his efforts, might now be said to be firmly seated in the saddle and be left to ride off herself. Bismarck has frequently expressed himself an admirer of the character of George Washington, boasting that Prussia was the first European State to recognise the great Republic of his creating; but his admiration would have assumed a much more flattering form had he been careful to select the proper time for imitating the Cincinnatus of the West,—had he, like Ariel, recognised when his 'task was fairly done,' and voluntarily surrendered the helm of the ship of State into other hands, resolved to spend the evening of his life in dignity and silence.

But while the dictates of dignity were not altogether obeyed by the resentful recluse of Friedrichsruh, the laws of decorum might also have been a little more scrupulously honoured in Berlin, where right-minded people were more than surprised to see the young Emperor hasten every night to revel in the scenes and dialogues of the '*Neue Herr*,' an historical drama of which the main motive was furnished by the Great Elector's dismissal and degradation of his father's old Chancellor, Schwarzenberg. What, therefore, with this and other signs in Berlin of want of consideration for the feelings of the fallen, as well as with the political revelations, the personal criticisms, the veiled threats, and stinging reproaches with which the banished Chancellor relieved his bursting heart, to his new 'body-organ' in Hamburg, or to the crowds of welcome journalists who flocked to listen to his sorrows, it was no wonder that the breach between him and the Emperor became complete; and, perhaps, even the prosecution of Count Limburg-Stirum, a diplomatist in the service of the State, for indulging in illegitimate journalism about a public question affecting the interests of the Empire, was meant as a timely hint to the Titan *frondeur* of Friedrichsruh that there was, after all, a limit to the liberty of speech which he so fiercely claimed.

## CHAPTER X

## EXILE AND DEATH

WHATEVER the grievances of the dismissed Chancellor, it cannot at least be said that he bore his fall with dignity and resignation. "Night must it be," as Schiller sings, "ere Friedland's star can shine." But in this respect Bismarck proved himself most dissimilar to Wallenstein, with whom he otherwise had so many points in common, and above all things that personal ambition which would have created an *imperium in imperio* within the dominions of his Emperor. Far from shining in the dark, Bismarck's star seemed but to suffer murky eclipse; and misfortune, which can evoke all that is magnanimous and heroic in some men, only brought to light some of the worst features and foibles of the great Chancellor's otherwise splendid character. Formerly a Colossus bestriding Europe, he now appeared to some little more than a querulous Diogenes in his tub. The proportions of the Grand Old Man of Germany seemed to have shrivelled up and shrunk away after his exile to the Sachsenwald.

Among other honours wherewith the Emperor sought to soften the fall of his Chancellor he had conferred upon him the title of Duke of Lauenburg, but the Prince never once made use of this most unwelcome dignity. *Beneficia non obtruduntur*, he once remarked; his new ducal title, he now added, would be an effective enough disguise when travelling *incognito*. Once when a letter arrived at Friedrichsruh to the 'Duchess of Lauenburg,' the Princess handed it across the luncheon-table to her husband, who raised his right hand to his temple as if formally saluting, and said, 'Delighted, madam, to make your acquaintance.' When some one said to the Prince that he ought to be very flattered by the words of the Emperor to the Grand Duke of Saxe-

Weimar that he felt 'as sorrowful as if he had again lost his grandfather,' 'What?' replied the Prince in anger, 'do you call that a compliment? Why, I was driven away like a dog.' As a matter of fact he had been more than brusquely treated, and the Emperor's attitude to him was not without an appearance of decided insincerity. At the final interview between the two, Bismarck rose and said, in English, 'Then I am in your way, Sire?' 'Yes,' said His Majesty, curtly and coldly in reply, and he might have added, what he undoubtedly felt :

'Cassio, I love thee,  
But never more be officer of mine.'

And yet in the missive in which he accepted the resignation of the Chancellor, the Emperor committed himself to the statement that 'the reasons adduced by you for your decision have convinced me that *further attempts* to induce you to withdraw your request would be hopeless.' The chief of those reasons, as afterwards appeared from the publication of Bismarck's request for leave to resign, were that the Emperor insisted on changing the practice of forty years in regard to ministerial responsibility—Prussian ministers having hitherto reported to the Crown through the Premier, as in England, while the Kaiser-King now wished them to come direct to himself; that his Majesty sought to restrict the freedom of his Chancellor's intercourse with members of the Reichstag ('The commands of my Sovereign with regard to the private visits of political personages end at the threshold of my wife's drawing-room,' Bismarck had replied to this); but, above all things, that he—the Chancellor—found it incompatible with his conscience and conviction to carry out the foreign policy of the 'new course.' 'Were I,' he wrote, 'to undertake to execute the directions of your Majesty, I should be imperilling all the successes of importance for the German Empire which our foreign policy, framed in accordance

with the views of both your Majesty's predecessors, has achieved. . . .'

But, apart from the field of foreign policy, Bismarck had felt himself unable to follow his impetuous '*neue Herr*' over stock and stone in the domain of domestic affairs; he stood aghast at the Emperor's schemes for ameliorating the lot of the working classes, and thus taking the wind out of the Socialists' sails. Although he neither approved nor countersigned the Emperor's Labour Edicts, he assisted in drafting them by his Majesty's desire, and was thus able to tone them down in some respects. Bismarck afterwards described the results of the Labour Conference as 'equal to zero—a *coup d'épée dans l'eau*'; and, indeed, his main motive in advising his 'new master' to summon this Conference was the secret conviction that it would tend to obviate the dangers of his policy, and that, in fact, it would do what it actually did.

*'Qui sert son pays, sert souvent un ingrat.'*

Such was the feeling with which Bismarck had retired into his exile, his banishment to the Sachsenwald—the more so as he had found, to his great surprise, that even the aspen leaves of the Bourse had never so much as quivered at his fall. In his resignation he had written in conclusion, 'Now that I know that your Majesty has no longer any use for these [services], I may retire from political life without any apprehension that my resolution will be judged inopportune by public opinion.' But it was precisely an apprehension of this kind that he secretly cherished, and it added immensely to the bitterness of his resentment against the monarch who had 'driven him away like a dog' to find, contrary to all his firm expectations, that public opinion in the Fatherland had not been so very profoundly stirred by his retirement from power.

This resentment was at once shared and fostered by several members of his family, and he began to criticise with the most audacious candour the character and policy of his

successor and his Sovereign. The latter he sneered at as a 'rich heir'; 'a young dog frisking about in the sun'; 'a young foxhound that barks at everything, smells at everything, touches everything, and ends by causing complete disorder in the room in which he is, no matter how large it is.' 'William the First,' he once remarked, could get angry, but *his politesse de cœur* never left him.' A favourite device of the ex-Chancellor was to belaud the character of his Majesty's predecessors, and then break off without completing the parallel, although he once admitted that William II. had wonderful powers of assimilation. The Prince repeatedly avowed that he felt no ill-will towards his young master, but his words at other times belied him; and his feelings towards his successor, General von Caprivi—whom he characterised as a *ministre étranger—aux affaires*—he never attempted to dissemble either in his table-talk or in the *Hamburger Nachrichten*, which had now become his obsequious mouth-piece and body-organ in lieu of the *North German Gazette*. 'If I had been in office,' he said, 'I should never have put pen to such a pact' as the Anglo-German agreement in regard to Africa based on an exchange of the island of Heligoland for Zanzibar. 'If it was the will of the Emperor,' he further remarked, 'that Heligoland should be procured at all hazards, I think it might have been got cheaper'—to which the Emperor promptly replied by revealing the fact that, when in office, Bismarck himself had added a marginal note to a despatch from the Ambassador in London to the effect that the friendship of England must be secured at almost any cost.

Every Roland from Friedrichsrub was encountered by an Oliver at Berlin, and never more emphatically than when the Emperor replied to the *frondeur* of Friedrichsrub, who had accused his successor of throwing France into the arms of Russia and of sacrificing the agrarian interests of Germany to those of Austria, by elevating his new Chancellor to the rank of Count, with an after-dinner eulogy of his shining

virtues. 'The new Imperial Chancellor, that simple, homely Prussian General,' said his Majesty, 'had in two years succeeded in making himself conversant with and in mastering problems of extreme difficulty. With a rare political insight he had at the right moment saved the Fatherland from evil consequences. The Reichstag, by a great majority, had shown that it recognised the far-seeing political vision of this man, and that it associated itself with him. Despite the insinuations and obstructions which the Imperial Chancellor and his (the Emperor's) advisers had encountered from various quarters, they had succeeded in guiding the Fatherland into new paths,' thanks to his (the new Chancellor's) 'devoted and distinguished labours.'

It was for expelling Austria from the Germanic family of nations that Bismarck himself had been made a Count, and now his successor had been raised to the same rank for sacrificing the interests of Germany to those of the Hapsburg Power! What could have been harder to bear, unless, perhaps, it was the way in which the Emperor protected Herr von Boetticher, chief of the Imperial Home Office, from the consequences of certain revelations, emanating from Friedrichsrub, as to the financial past of this minister whom Bismarck suspected of having most ungratefully conspired to bring about his fall? All this only tended to make the resentful exile of Friedrichsrub more querulous and aggressive than ever; and to all the remonstrances of his real friends—who were not always to be found within the circle of his own family—he merely replied that he declined to lie still 'like a dumb dog' or a 'hibernating bear.' Nay, he even got himself elected to the Reichstag, though by a surprisingly poor majority, with the avowed object of returning to Parliament as the champion of the Opposition, though he never carried out his threat.

But even his enemies admitted that the provocation he had received to do this was of a very ample kind, beginning with the following circular, which his successor, General

Caprivi, by order of the Emperor, sent to all the representatives of Germany and Prussia abroad :

' It will not have escaped your notice that the present sentiments and views of Prince Bismarck, Duke of Lauenburg, have been published in the Press. His Majesty's Government, fully recognising the imperishable services of this great statesman, was able to maintain silence on this subject so long as those utterances were confined to personal matters and home policy ; but, now that foreign policy has been touched upon, it is forced to consider whether reserve is still advisable, and may not be open to injurious misinterpretation abroad. His Majesty the Emperor, however, is convinced that either a quieter state of feeling will set in, or that the true value of the matter reproduced by the Press will, in time, be gauged more justly abroad as well as at home ; and that there is no reason to fear any serious injury from remarks more or less correctly reproduced, and possibly distorted intentionally, addressed in part to persons known to be hostile to Germany. His Majesty distinguishes between Prince Bismarck as he was and Prince Bismarck as he is, and wishes his Government to avoid all that might tend to tarnish the German nation's conception of its greatest statesman. In informing you of this, and authorising you to express yourself if necessary to the above effect, I have the honour to formulate the hope that the Government to which you are accredited will attach no real weight to the comments of the Press on Prince Bismarck's views.'

This circular had been sent out within less than two months after Bismarck left Berlin as the honour-laden recipient of a 'first-class funeral.' But it was nothing to the thunderbolt launched by the German Jove, throned on the Galgenberg at Potsdam, against the rebellious Titans—father and son—of the Sachsenwald, when, in June 1892, they repaired to Vienna for the marriage of Count Herbert Bismarck to the Countess Margaret Hoyos, a granddaughter, by the mother's side, of Mr. Whitehead, the English torpedo-manufacturer at Fiume. Torpedoes? What were those moving submarine mines at Fiume compared with the following shell that was hurled into the midst of the Bismarck wedding party in the Kaiserstadt by the chief artillerist of William the Second at Berlin? To Prince



Reuss, German Ambassador in Vienna, Count Caprivi wrote :

'In view of the approaching wedding of Count Herbert, Bismarck in Vienna, I have the honour, after reporting to his Majesty, to communicate to you the following : As regards the rumours of a *rapprochement* between his Majesty the Emperor and Prince Bismarck, the one indispensable condition—the taking of the first step by the ex-Chancellor—is wanting. But even if such a step were taken, the *rapprochement* could never go so far as to entitle public opinion to suppose that Prince Bismarck had regained any influence over the conduct of affairs. Should the Prince or his family make any approach to you, pray confine yourself to conventional forms of courtesy. This order is also to be observed by the staff of the Embassy. I may add that his Majesty will take no notice of the wedding. You are instructed to inform Count Kalnoky of this at once, in the form that seems best to you.'

It may be imagined what were the feelings of Bismarck himself when, in consequence of this boycotting despatch, the Emperor Francis Joseph declined to receive him ! As a 'military man and an admirer of his majesty,' he had, as in courtesy bound, solicited an interview ; and to his *written* request for such an honour, the Emperor had returned a curt, *verbal* refusal. And this to the statesman who, in spite of the most dogged opposition on the part of his own Sovereign, William I., had been the author of the Austro-German Alliance. Was Belisarius, reduced to the begging of an obolus by the wayside, a case of fallen greatness worse than this ?

Bismarck himself, as can well be imagined, left Vienna in a transport of rage, and poured out his sorrows in the most outspoken manner to a crowd of sympathetic interviewers at Munich and at Kissingen, to whom he characterised a Foreign Office article on the wedding incident as a 'stupid piece of audacious impertinence,' though he affected to 'laugh at it all.' 'We Germans fear God, and nothing else in the world,' he had once declared in the Reichstag, amid thunders of applause ; and was he now to be afraid of the German

Kaiser, who, at most, was the mere vice-gerent of God in the affairs of the Fatherland? His journey to Vienna had resembled a triumphal progress, for the people ran forth to see and acclaim at every station their great national hero, though their rulers—like ‘the slaves who take their master’s humour for a warrant’—held aloof and, metaphorically speaking, drew their blinds down as he passed along; while, on his return home from Kissingen, the object of the Kaiser’s persecution was accorded a most enthusiastic welcome at Jena—whence, in his student days, he had been once expelled for fighting duels—the professors of that ancient University assuring him that they, at least, did not in the least distinguish between the ex-Chancellor ‘as he was, and as he is.’

This quarrel between the architect of the Empire and its ‘rich heir’ had now become the greatest scandal of the time—the more so as the Emperor, just before gaily setting out for Norway to indulge in the pastime of harpooning whales, had driven the dart of his enmity over its barb right into the ex-Chancellor’s heart, by ordaining the publication of the despatch in which he directed that the Bismarcks at Vienna should be treated like social lepers. Let no one accuse Bismarck of carrying his resentment beyond the grave before giving due weight to the impression which must have been produced upon his heart by the treatment meted out to him and his in Vienna in accordance with the deliberate decree of the monarch, the ‘rich heir,’ who owed him so much, and but for him, indeed, would never have been in a position to ascend the throne of Barbarossa.

Nevertheless, in spite of this incontestable truth, the Emperor was so far blind, malevolently blind, to the elementary facts connected with the founding of the new German Empire, that he repeatedly referred to his father, but especially his sainted grandfather, as the real artificers of the national unity. ‘How wondrously,’ he once exclaimed at Bremen in a post-prandial oration after Bismarck

had declined one of his advances, 'how wondrously the providence of God led him! [William I.] . . . What unexpected successes did he not, with God's help, achieve! To him was it appointed by God to fulfil the aspirations of all Germans, and with the victoriously-won Imperial Crown to give back to Germany her unity. For this task he had to find great men who should share in the honour of carrying out his ideas and co-operating with him as his counsellors; ' whereas it might be conclusively shown that, in all the crucial crises and events which led to the unification of Germany, King William's hand had simply to be forced by his great Minister, who thus became the real architect of modern Germany in spite of the timid scruples and short-sighted opposition of his royal master. 'The disinclination of my master to enter promptly into new situations,' wrote Bismarck to Count Andrassy at the time of the negotiations for the Austro-German Alliance, 'a disinclination which is inherent in his temperament, hampers my activity,' just as it had ever done so. No wonder Bismarck smiled on hearing that William II., at the opening of the Kiel Canal, had officially decreed to his grandfather the title of 'Great,' with the remark that such a title could not be conferred upon a German monarch in the same way as that of Commerzienrath was bestowed upon a Berlin merchant.

Meanwhile William II. had shown that, if his reading of recent German history was singularly erroneous, or his interpretation of it at least astoundingly perverse; if his head had failed to comprehend aright the historic truths of his time, his impetuous heart at any rate was capable of generosity and forgivingness. For in little more than a year after he had cut the tablecloth between him and his father's Chancellor by the publication of the Vienna despatch, the Emperor, who was then in Austria himself, learned that Bismarck had suddenly fallen seriously ill at Kissingen; and he at once telegraphed his sympathy, with an offer to house him in a royal castle more favourable to health than the rigorous

climate of Varzin or Friedrichsruh. Yet the offer was at once declined, politely but coldly, with thanks.

Again the scandal went on as before, till the Emperor's next birthday (January, 1894), when his Majesty sent one of his personal aides-de-camp, Lieutenant-Colonel von Moltke, a nephew of the great 'battle-thinker,' to Friedrichsruh, as the bearer of a second olive-leaf in the shape of a flask of very fine old Rhenish to drink his health withal. 'All Germany,' as I have elsewhere written,<sup>1</sup> 'was more or less intoxicated with that rare old flask of Hock. Within four days of its delivery at Friedrichsruh, Bismarck had come to Berlin to thank the Emperor in person for the gift, and been kissed and hugged by his Majesty with all the fervour of a penitent lover who has suddenly become reconciled to his petulant mistress. Rarely or never since the triumphal entry of the troops, after the French War, had the Linden Avenue been packed with such multitudes as gathered to witness the outward signs of all this *redintegratio amoris*. The world had been again reminded in the most striking manner that wonders, truly, would never cease. Bismarck was received in Berlin with Sovereign honours; there is no other way of describing the attentions that were showered upon him. In room of the lately-deceased Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, he was made chief of the Cuirassier regiment of which he had hitherto been merely *à la suite*; he was fetched from the station in great state by Prince Henry, and conducted back to it by the Emperor himself—a parting compliment which his Majesty had failed to pay his ex-Chancellor on the occasion of the latter's "first-class funeral"; and otherwise there were no bounds to his Majesty's melting generosity and love.' In less than a month the Emperor returned the visit at Friedrichsruh on the occasion of the Chancellor's seventy-ninth birthday, when he presented him with a magnificent steel cuirass 'as a symbol of German gratitude, which enfolds you with its

<sup>1</sup> 'The German Emperor, William II.' Bliss, Sands & Co.

steadfast loyalty, and to which I, too, desire to give my eloquent expression.'

Yet even in time the bucklings of this steel cuirass were burst, so to speak, by the resentful heavings of the ex-Chancellor's breast, still a prey to the bitterest emotions—emotions which could scarcely be repressed when next year (1895), on the occasion of the Prince's eightieth birthday, the Emperor again returned to Friedrichsruh, this time at the head of a miniature army. The Opposition in the Reichstag had managed to negative a motion for conveying to the Prince the official congratulations of the Imperial Parliament on this great occasion, when the Emperor flew into a towering rage and telegraphed to Friedrichsruh the expression of his 'most profound indignation at the resolution adopted,' as being in 'complete opposition with the feelings of all the German peoples and princes.'

Moreover, in order to emphasise this 'profound indignation' of his at the conduct of the Reichstag towards the man whom he himself had so bitterly persecuted but a couple of years before, he started off from Berlin with the little Crown Prince, and, alighting from the train at a station near Friedrichsruh, placed himself at the head of a combined force of all arms which he had ordered to muster in a meadow against the hour of his coming; when, with bands playing and colours flying, His Majesty, in the bravest of his war-paint, gallantly led on this little host through the budding glades of the Sachsenwald as if to re-capture the castle of Friedrichsruh, or at least the love and allegiance of its once rebellious and still resentful lord. In the presence of his marshalled troops, the Emperor, to the thunder of artillery and the eloquence of one of his most grandiloquent orations, presented the Prince with a magnificent sword of honour, and loudly called on all Germans, 'from the snow-clad Alps to the dykes of the Baltic, where the breakers thunder and roar, to shout with glowing hearts, "Prince Bismarck, Duke of Lauenburg, *Er lebe hoch!* Hurrah!"'

But the grim and unforgiving old Chancellor, who had thus offered his cheek to the imperial kiss of reconciliation, was still only the ghost of his former self. Things were by no means yet between the two as they had been before. Formal courtesies continued to pass between them, but every now and again the wounded old lion in the Sachsenwald emitted a groan or a growl, and it soon became clear that he was anything but acting on the advice which he gave to Li Hung Chang, when the 'Bismarck of China,' in the course of his European tour, went to pay his respects to his German prototype at Friedrichsruh. 'The purpose of my visit,' said Chang, 'is to ask your Serenity's advice.' 'What advice?' said Bismarck. 'How can we best reform China?' 'I cannot judge that from here.' 'How, then, can I act successfully against the Court of Peking?' 'One cannot act against the Court,' returned Bismarck. 'No Minister can resist the will of the ruler: he only executes it or gives advice.'

But here at least was an ex-Minister, in the person of the Prince himself, who soon made bold to act against the Court of Berlin by criticising the actions of his Sovereign in the most adverse and galling manner. In the autumn of 1896, when struck to the patriotic quick by the spectacle of all the fraternal embracings between France and Russia, he made bold to publish to an astonished world the fact that, behind the back of the Triple Alliance, he had concluded with Russia, in 1884, an 'insurance treaty,' as it was called, providing for the benevolent neutrality of that Power in the event of a war between France and Germany—a treaty which the present Emperor and his new Ministers had not renewed, and thus exposed the Fatherland to a much greater war-risk than before—the risk of a war on two fronts. With his dying words the old Kaiser had solemnly enjoined his grandson to be always considerate and conciliatory towards Russia; and this grandson, with his Caprivi, had ended by detaching Russia from Germany, and throwing her into the open arms of an exultant France.

This it was which had touched the patriotic pride of Bismarck to the quick, and hurried him into the course of action which again brought down upon him the reprobation of his indignant Sovereign. No man in all Europe had taken to heart more seriously than Bismarck all the Franco-Russian fraternisation of the recent past, and the first sign of his solicitude on the subject was the publication of a letter which he had written to the old Kaiser, during the siege of Plevna, expressing the warmest sympathies with Russia and her aims. The text of this letter and the tenour of the treaty of 1884 were only links in the same chain of endeavour which aimed at showing how colossally the present Emperor and his advisers had blundered in the management of the Empire's relations to Russia, and it could not be expected that William II. should bow to the rod or put anything but the most serious construction on the breach of his official duty which Bismarck had now again committed.

The rupture between the two was again renewed, and it was now the turn of the Emperor's emotions, heaving in his indignant breast, to burst the bucklings of his cuirass. What was the action now brought against the Prince by his head-forester at Friedrichsruh for breach of contract, compared with the anger of the Emperor against his ex-Chancellor for breach of trust? Explanations of a very lame and unconvincing kind followed in the Parliaments both of Germany and Austria, where Ministers hurled their veiled reproaches against the betrayer of Friedrichsruh—though Bismarck took no more notice of these vituperations than he did of the Cretan question, of which he said, 'I can assure you, I take less interest in Crete than in the smallest mound of earth in my garden.'

The first overt sign of the Emperor's stern displeasure at this scathing attack on his policy was his Majesty's acceptance of an invitation to the wedding of Count Bismarck-Bohlen (a relative of the Prince) to the daughter of Herr von Wedell, Minister of the Royal House,

on condition only that Count Herbert Bismarck should be omitted from the list of marriage-guests. But the Kaiser further allowed the Prince's next birthday to pass without a single word of recognition—a very marked and almost monstrous omission in a country like Germany.

The breach grew ever wider, and when at last the Kaiser went off to St. Petersburg in the autumn of 1897 to embrace his 'dear friend' the Tsar, what said Bismarck to a French interviewer? 'Let France wait a bit. Here in Germany we have neither direction nor principles—nothing, nothing at all! Everything is groping about; the treasures of influence which I took pains to store up are being squandered without profit;' much in the same way, the ex-Chancellor might have added, as Frederick William the Fat squandered all the hoards of wealth which had been treasured up by his uncle, Frederick the Great.

It was only when, soon after this, a new ironclad called 'Fürst Bismarck' came to be launched at Kiel, that the Emperor, sinking his animosities in the solemnity of the occasion, sent one of his Admirals to Friedrichsruh to invite the presence of the Prince at the christening ceremony; and, when questioned as to this, the ex-Chancellor remarked: 'Indeed! people (*i.e.* the Emperor) still appear to think that I'm in the same case as the servant girl who once said to my good wife at Varzin, "I can accustom myself to everything but being left alone."' "

Nevertheless, at the launching ceremony in question, Admiral Tirpitz, who did the christening, referred to Bismarck, whose name the ironclad was to bear, as 'the greatest statesman of the century'; while the Emperor himself, in presenting the inexorable exile of Friedrichsruh with a model of the vessel, 'rejoiced to know that your Highness's name is connected for all time with my fleet, which will be the prouder as this is the first great armed cruiser we ourselves have built.' On the part of the Prince, a coldly polite acknowledgement of this compliment, and



nothing more, and those who had concluded that the incident had tended to improve the relations between the Prince and the Kaiser were presently disillusioned on hearing that the ex-Chancellor demurred to the Emperor calling his grandmother, Kaiserin Augusta, 'a great woman.'

Bismarck could not endorse this opinion. 'The illustrious lady,' he said, 'joined lustily in the work of ruining my nerves. She was herself of a nervous, unsteady, and restless nature;' and he gave reasons for this opinion, emphasising her Majesty's predilection for everything Catholic and French. Thereupon the Emperor replied to this criticism by a telegram to his aunt, the Grand Duchess of Baden, on the occasion of the Empress Augusta's birthday, in which he again referred to her 'great mother,' and said that history would 'build her a monument which nobody could destroy.'

But presently there was another turn of the tide, when the Emperor came forward with his new scheme for the increase of the navy, and when Bismarck said that, if he were in the Reichstag, he would vote for it. This once more melted the heart of the changeable and impressionable Kaiser, and he consented to his brother, Prince Henry, going to Friedrichsruh (in the winter of 1897-98) to bid the ex-Chancellor farewell before setting out for China, with a couple of rickety old ironclads, to take forcible possession of Kiao-Chau, and to preach with the 'mailed fist,' as with the flaming sword, less of the 'German Michel' than of the Archangel Michael, 'the message of your Majesty's consecrated person.' On taking tearful leave of the octogenarian Chancellor, Prince Henry said, 'Let me also salute the brow which my grandfather so often kissed?'

The Emperor himself, too, presently followed suit. For after the exchange of all the inflated after-dinner oratory at Kiel, which drew from all Europe an explosive roar of laughter, and on taking final leave of his 'only brother,' after a long and passionate embrace on the luridly limelight-

illuminated bridge of the 'Deutschland' in the presence of melted and huzzahing multitudes, the Emperor set out for Friedrichsruh to dine with the intensely amazed lord thereof on his way back to Berlin. 'This is quite English,' remarked Bismarck with a chuckle, as he was wheeled in his invalid's chair to the table. 'I drive to dinner.' But the young Kaiser and the old Reichskanzler were not alone for a moment during his Majesty's stay of an hour and a half, and not a word either of politics or personalities was spoken.

This was the last time the two were to meet on this side the grave. With the *Rollstuhl*, or bath chair, in which the ex-Chancellor had now been wheeled in to dinner with his imperial visitor, he was never afterwards able to dispense. Since the death of his wife at Varzin, in November 1894—the dear and devoted companion of forty-seven years of pure and unblemished married life—Bismarck had never been quite the same man. The infirmities of age grew increasingly fast upon him, and he frequently complained about the labour of continued life. One great source of consolation to him was that he had now two grandsons in the direct line, for he had once been afraid that his race would die out. Nevertheless his table-talk was more than ever about the rapid decay of his powers. 'My complaint,' he said, 'is weariness of life. I have no longer any object in life. I have no official duties now, and nothing that I see as a spectator gives me pleasure. The longer I live the more this will be the case. I feel lonely: I have lost my wife, and my sons have their own business to attend to. Agriculture and forestry have lost their interest for me with advancing years. I seldom visit the woods and fields; I have no desire to see them, now that I do not ride and shoot. Politics, too, are beginning to bore me. As I said before, weariness of life is my complaint, if I have one.'

But his household physician, Professor Schweningen—the

only doctor out of the hundred who had successively attended on the Prince in the course of his long life to whom he had been absolutely submissive—soon began to observe certain unmistakeably serious symptoms in the iron constitution of his illustrious patient. As early as October 1897, Dr. Schweningen had given the Prince's family to understand that the end could not be very far off. On New Year's Day of the following year, there was a rumour of the Prince's death; yet he lived to celebrate, on the 25th March, the sixtieth anniversary of his entrance into the Prussian Army, when the Emperor drank his health on board a North German Lloyd steamer at Bremerhaven; while on his ensuing birthday—the eighty-third—the Prince again received the congratulations of his Sovereign, which had not invariably been tendered in the preceding years.

But it was the last birthday that the Prince was to celebrate. For towards the end of July all Germany, all the civilised world, was excited by the news that Bismarck had fallen dangerously ill, and that all his family had been summoned to Friedrichsruh. That was true; but then, after the Prince had passed through a severe crisis, it was again announced that he had once more rallied, and that 'eating, drinking, and smoking gave him pleasure again.' Being told that a number of athletes had come from Hamburg with the desire to pay him their respects, the Prince remarked, 'I cannot see them; but, as they are athletes, tell them that I have been standing on my head for a week.' A day or two later he had another relapse, and at about eleven o'clock on the night of Saturday, 30th July, 1898, the wearied Titan finally sank to his rest, after a death-struggle worthy of the man whose whole life had been spent in fierce and ceaseless combat.

'Prince of the iron heart and iron hand!  
Lo, Death, thy single victor in the fight,  
Urges against thee now thine own demand,  
The claim that Might is Right.'

Professor Schweninger, who had left Friedrichsrub, only returned in time to see his illustrious patient die; and the Prince's last words were: 'Thank you, my child!' addressed to the devoted daughter, Countess Rantzau, who had tried to ease her father's pain. The whole princely family was prostrated with grief. A message was despatched by Dr. Schweninger to inform the Emperor of what had happened, and found him at Bergen, on his way home from his accustomed summer trip to Norway. His Majesty at once telegraphed to:

'PRINCE HERBERT BISMARCK, FRIEDRICHSRUH.—In deep sorrow, sharing in the grief which has seized you all for the dear great one now dead, I lament the loss of Germany's great son, whose faithful co-operation in the work of re-uniting our Fatherland gained him the lifelong friendship of his Majesty the great Emperor, my late grandfather, and the undying gratitude of the whole German nation for all time to come. I shall prepare his last resting-place in Berlin Cathedral, beside those of my ancestors. 'WILLIAM.'

To this Prince Herbert hastened to reply that his 'Majesty's wish would be a command had not the deceased most earnestly, in the very last days of his life, repeated his wish to rest in his Saxon forest.' And not only had Bismarck done that, but he had also prescribed the spot where he wished his bones to be laid, on a little eminence, or knoll, crowned with a clump of firs, oaks, and mountain-ash, adjacent to the unpretentious chateau which had been presented to him by his 'old master'—an eminence on which stands an allegorical monument erected as a tribute from the people of Anhalt on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. This monument represents an heroic stag at bay, at its feet lying one gigantic hound *hors de combat*, while another cowers back half afraid to attack. It was beside this symbolic monument that Bismarck had directed that his body should be buried, with this for his epitaph:

*PRINCE BISMARCK*

HERE RESTS

PRINCE BISMARCK.

BORN 1ST APRIL, 1815.

DIED [30TH JULY, 1898.]

A FAITHFUL GERMAN SERVANT OF  
EMPEROR WILLIAM THE FIRST.

What could have been thought by William II. of the significance of all this when, accompanied by the Empress, he reached Friedrichsruh on the evening of the third day after the Prince's death, after steaming at high pressure from Bergen to Kiel, only to find that the coffin containing the remains of the first German Chancellor had already been closed in presence of Prince Hohe lohe, the successor of Count Caprivi, and that he could not enjoy the satisfaction of looking once more upon the heroic lineaments of his grandsire's 'faithful' paladin. Lenbach, the painter, and Begas, the sculptor, two of Germany's foremost artists, had hurried to Friedrichsruh to exercise their art for the last time upon the features of the deceased statesman, but had been denied this privilege, or had declined to avail themselves of it. Before starting from Norway the Emperor had ordered to Friedrichsruh guards of honour of an infantry regiment from Altona, as well as of the Seydlitz (Bismarck) Cuirassiers from Halberstadt, and the 1st Dragoon Guards (Queen Victoria's Own), in which Prince Herbert had served; but he found that the watchers in the death-chamber were a couple of simple foresters from the Friedrichsruh estate.

On arriving the Imperial couple were received by the assembled members of the Bismarck family, and on alighting from the train the Emperor kissed Prince Herbert on either cheek. Their Majesties remained for nearly an hour in the chateau, and were present at a consecration service in

the death-chamber—the Emperor standing, while the Empress was seated. They were subsequently accompanied by the members of the princely family back to the station, where their Majesties bade them farewell, but without having been able to induce Prince Herbert to accept the Emperor's repeated offer either of a public funeral for his illustrious father, or a mausoleum at the public expense, or even a statue and sarcophagus to his memory in the new Berlin Cathedral, which is to be the Pantheon, so to speak, of the Hohenzollern race. His Majesty was firmly informed that the body of the first German Chancellor, 'the true servant of William I.,' would remain in the room in which he died until the completion of the mausoleum on Stag Knoll, where the deceased Prince would be laid to his final rest beside the ashes of his wife, transferred from their temporary grave at Varzin.

Before leaving Bergen the Emperor had ordered that the Court should go into mourning for ten days, the Army and the Navy for a week; that the flags on all Imperial and Prussian public buildings, including his palaces, and those of the Princes of the Blood, should fly half-mast, and on returning to Berlin he issued the following rescript to Prince Hohenlœhe, his third Chancellor :—

'With my high Allies, with the whole German people, I stand mourning at the bier of the first Chancellor of the German Empire—Prince Otto von Bismarck, Duke of Lauenburg. We who were witnesses of his splendid labours, who looked up to him with admiration as the master of statecraft, as a fearless fighter in war as in peace, as the most devoted son of the Fatherland, and the most faithful servant of his Emperor and King, are deeply affected by the death of a man whom God the Lord fashioned as His instrument to achieve the realisation of the undying aspiration for Germany's unity and greatness. This is not the moment to enumerate all the achievements of the great man who has gone to his rest, all the cares he bore for the Emperor and the Empire, and all the successes that he won. They are too mighty, too manifold. History alone can do them justice, and will engrave them all on brazen tablets. I, however, am impelled to give expression before the

whole world to the universal sorrow and grateful admiration which to-day fill the whole nation, and in the name of the nation to vow that what he, the great Chancellor, under the Emperor William the Great, created, I will maintain and develop, and, if need be, defend with blood and treasure. In this may God help me. I instruct you to make this Rescript public."

In addition to issuing this laudatory rescript the Emperor ordered a special funeral service to be held in the Kaiser William Memorial Church in Berlin, which was attended by all that was high and representative in the Empire—all but the members of the Bismarck family, whom, 'with characteristic considerateness, his Majesty refrained from inviting, as thinking that he could not do so in the first sad days of their mourning;' while one of the most devoted adherents of the Bismarck family, Dr. Moritz Busch, the Chancellor's Boswell, had been allowed to publish to the world, on the morning after the Prince's death, the text of his historic 'request for leave to resign'—permeated with its bitter spirit of *coactus voluit*.

Telegrams of condolence poured into Friedrichsruh from all the highest in the world, including Queen Victoria, the Prince of Wales, and the Empress Frederick—whose formal 'On the death of your father I express for you and yours my sincere sympathy' formed a significant contrast to the 'sincere sympathy for the loss of a loving father and splendid genius' of Lord Salisbury. The German Press exhausted all its powers of panegyric, and Bismarck's bier was piled high with the costliest of flowers. But the leaves and petals of those flowers were also stirred by the storm of controversy which his death had again unchained, and by the resentments, surviving beyond the grave, which robbed this grave of its accustomed rites in the case of such a king of men as he had been, and impressed the German people with a profound sense of dissatisfaction at the lack of historic completeness in the passing of their great national hero. What they otherwise felt was well expressed in the address

of condolence which was sent to Prince Herbert Bismarck by the Federal Council, representing the Sovereigns of the Fatherland :

'The Federal Council cannot refrain from expressing to your Serene Highness its deeply-felt grief at the death of the great and heroic first Chancellor of the United Fatherland. The two decades during which he worked at our head have become imperishable landmarks of Germany's greatness and welfare. His spirit was so powerful that it will continue to make itself felt for centuries to come. His name will always be honoured as the supreme expression of true patriotism and nation-leading statecraft. He is, therefore, assured of the everlasting gratitude of the Federal Council and of the whole of the German nation.'

Yes ; history will not judge Bismarck by what he seemed at the end of his career, but by what he was and did at its zenith. The clouded dimness of the setting sun cannot make men forget or cease to admire its morning splendour or its meridian glory. The mighty work he did in his day and generation will always be his best *éloge* ; and it will be long before the world is again treated to the spectacle of such a striking and engrossing figure as that of the man who towered among his contemporaries like a survival from the heroic ages. With all his faults and imperfections, it will be a very long time before the German nation produces another such immortal son. Monuments have already sprung up to him all over the Empire. But as the true founder of that Empire, his memory will live when these memorials of perishable stone may have passed away. He was great to his contemporaries, who viewed him critically close. But, looked at through the more impartial light of history, which settles on outlines only, leaving flaws of mere detail unseen or softened down, he will appear one of the grandest and most imposing figures, not only of the nineteenth century, but also of all recorded time.













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